

THE INDEPENDENT

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TODAY'S NEWS

Has Tory policy on schooling worked?

New types of schools promoted by the last government feature prominently in a list of the most-improved schools published yesterday. Conservatives said their policies had been vindicated.

Just 240 schools out of more than 5,000 in this year's league tables have improved every year for the past four years. One in three is grant-maintained, including the London Oratory, where the Prime Minister sends his children, and four of the 20 most improved are city technology colleges.

City technology colleges and the 667 grant-maintained schools have been more generously financed than other schools. The colleges usually test and interview applicants to ensure they admit the full range of ability, and some non-selective grant-maintained schools interview prospective pupils. Under Labour, both will lose some of their independence over admissions and will be funded in the same way as other schools. Stephen Dorrell, shadow education secretary, said: "I warmly welcome the fact that Labour have adopted the important Conservative policy of publishing league tables. Why does Mr Blunkett [David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education] insist on destroying the grant-maintained system when the evidence points so unambiguously to its success?" Government sources denied the list was embarrassing: "There is a good cross-section of schools of all categories ... Of course a representative proportion will be grant-maintained."

Teachers, who criticise the tables for giving only raw scores and not taking into account schools' intake, questioned whether the new improvement index was a true reflection of performance. Mr Blunkett defended the index: he believes it gives parents a fairer picture of their children's schools. He promised that new "value-added tables" comparing a school's intake with its exam performance would be piloted from next year.

However, the tables reveal how difficult it is for schools to maintain that improvement: 416 had better results in both 1995 and 1996, only to see them drop again this year.

The top local authority at GCSE, for the second year running, is the Isles of Scilly, with one school where 61.6 per cent of pupils are getting good grades. The bottom is Hull, which displaces last year's worst authority, Islington, London. Hull also has the highest truancy rate.

The best-performing school at A-level was fee-paying King Edward's School, Birmingham, where pupils scored an average of between three and four As per candidate. The best state comprehensive at A-level was Lady Mannes' School, Bakewell, Derbyshire, where pupils scored an average of nearly three A grades each.

Why cancer campaigns help kill smokers

Britain has one of the worst survival rates from lung cancer in the west - partly because smokers feel so guilty. Anti-smoking campaigns are making them delay seeking medical treatment out of embarrassment, according to a study. Indeed, negative attitudes dominate the treatment of the disease, which kills 100 people a day in Britain. Smokers feel guilty about having brought the problem on themselves; doctors feel there is no hope; and there is little public interest in a disease that principally kills the old and the poor. Page 4

Chaplin film revealed

A revealing documentary film about Charlie Chaplin, hidden for a lifetime and never shown, has come to light in a garage. He probably kept the film out of the public eye because it stressed his working class origins - produced in 1928, it provides a rare account of Chaplin's childhood in south London and suggests that his hall-mark boots and trousers were inspired by the everyday clothes he saw worn in Lambeth. Page 4

World's best advert?

The advert for Blackcurrant Tango which features a hysterical, xenophobic spokesman running around in purple boxer shorts is the best TV advertisement in the world. That's the verdict, anyway, of the London International Advertising Awards, where it beat off 7,000 entries from 78 countries. Page 3

Barbie gets boob job

The figure that Barbie, that doll amongst dolls, has managed to maintain for almost four decades is not, it seems, altogether realistic. Mattel, the toy company that created Barbie in 1959, have decided that the illusion is unsustainable and are to reduce the size of her breasts. Column One, Page 2

Terror at the feet of an Egyptian Queen



Security men carry away the body of one of the attackers after the massacre

Photograph: Reuters

At least 60 people, including two Britons as well as Swiss, French, Japanese and Spanish tourists, were shot dead by gunmen in front of an ancient temple at Luxor in upper Egypt yesterday in the bloodiest incident of the country's five-year Islamist rebellion.

Robert Fisk says the killers have destroyed one of Egypt's biggest earners - foreign tourism - for perhaps years to come.

In Egypt yesterday, they went for the jugular. What else does the massacre at Luxor - where as many as 63 tourists were slaughtered and another 17 wounded - mean but a declaration of war against the Egyptian government, an attack that strikes at the very heart of the billion-dollar tourist industry?

The six gunmen who turned the courtyard of the 3,400-year-old temple of Queen Hatshepsut into a bloodbath, mowing down the European and Japanese tourists after they had climbed from their bus, were almost certainly members of the Gema'a Islamiya (Islamic group) who have been waging an armed conflict with the government since 1992, claiming President Hosni Mubarak's regime is corrupt and un-Islamic.

Most of the tourists had just descended from their bus 500m from the imposing, recently restored, colonnaded temple that stands beneath towering cliffs on the west bank of the Nile when six gunmen - all dressed in black - ran towards them, firing

automatic weapons. Screaming in pain and fear, many of the foreigners tried to take cover, falling over each other in their panic.

The gunmen tried to hijack another bus to escape and further casualties followed during a gun battle between the killers and the police. One eyewitness said panicking security police themselves shot dead three French tourists. At least two Egyptian

civilians were killed and another nine wounded. Egyptian state television last night claimed all six killers had been shot by the police after being pursued into the desert.

It was a massacre on an Algerian scale, the most ferocious since the start of the five-year uprising. The government in Cairo has repeatedly guaranteed that Egypt - despite a fire-bomb attack on a bus load of German tourists in September that left nine dead - was safe for foreign visitors. Now the gunmen at Luxor have turned their words to dust.

Almost as shocking for President Mubarak is that the gunmen should have attacked at Luxor, which has a considerable Christian population and appeared an oasis of security amid the conflict in upper Egypt. Last night, Luxor was under curfew.

Even after September's attack, important questions remained unanswered; the government claimed there were only two attackers, while eye-witnesses saw up to six. The gun-battle between police and gunmen in Luxor reportedly lasted three hours. Why did it take armed police so long to over- come six men?

The six were thought to have dressed in black clothes to look like members of Egypt's black-uniformed security police. Last night, lying in make-shift mortuaries, many of the dead remained unidentified; they had surrendered their passports before their visit to the Valley of the Queens. Other victims lay where they fell and were still there at nightfall - which means the death toll could rise to as high as 90.

Last month, imprisoned members of the Gema'a Islamiya were calling upon their brothers for a ceasefire and an end to the killing of foreigners. The Egyptian government contemptuously turned the offer down.

TOURISTS FLEE

Thomson, Britain's biggest holiday company, which has 1,300 clients in Egypt, said it was cancelling Egypt-bound flights tomorrow and would fly home any clients who wish to return early. Saga Holidays, which specialises in holidays for pensioners, said it was bringing its clients home and cancelling flights.

Thomas Cook, which has 270 people on holiday in Egypt, also offered to fly people home. The Foreign Office, which until yesterday was advising travellers to be "vigilant", expressed shock and regret at the attack, but issued no new advice.

A Swedish travel company cancelled all trips to Egypt and said it would bring home all customers on holiday there. Fridresor has about 1,000 people on holiday in Egypt. Jihan Salah, a spokesman for an Egyptian travel company, said yesterday: "The image for the long run is really bleak." But Egypt's tourism minister, Mamdouh el-Beltagi, insisted: "Egypt is no less safe than any destination including the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States and everywhere."

Mobile phone drivers put their foot in it

Drivers who use phones in the car have started to develop a new motoring technique - driving at 70mph without use of their hands while making complex business deals.

The decision to abandon traditional driving methods in favour of the legs and knees variety has prompted the police in the West Midlands to launch a crackdown on motorway drivers with dangerous mobile phone habits.

Examples of reckless driving captured by the police include a salesman who had his phone in one hand and an order book in another. Asked how he managed to control his vehicle, he replied: "I have developed the technique of driving with my knees."

Another man talking on his mobile on

the motorway was having difficulty hearing so used his spare hand to cover his ear, leaving the front seat passenger to steer.

A lorry driver trundling along the motorway was filmed steering a 40-tonne truck with his left foot. His right leg was resting on the dashboard while his hands were concentrating on dialling.

Acting Superintendent Paul Austen, who is heading the clampdown for the West Midlands Police, said: "The worst cases are often where the driver turns the car into an office. They have their papers spread out, their order book open, and they make deals on the phone. Watching where they are going seems a low priority."

He also tells of the case of a woman who was caught twice driving dangerously because she spent most of her time in the car

arranging her seven children's lives by phone.

Supt Austen insists if any motorist is going to have a conversation they should pull over and stop the car. Police motorway patrols, some fitted with video cameras, are being used in the West Midlands to target offenders.

Earlier this month, the Government threatened to introduce tough new laws if motorists failed to stop using mobile telephones at the wheel.

The police currently have the power to charge motorists whose driving was affected by using a telephone, under existing offences such as careless or dangerous driving. Lawbreakers can face up to two years in jail plus a fine.

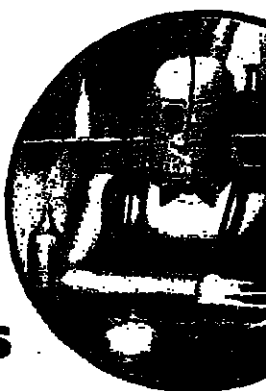
— Jason Benetto

INSIDE TODAY

A world ruled by women

10/YOUNG BRITAIN

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Chicago: Nigel Planer goes to jail

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3/LEADING STORIES

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

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the monks
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Sex, love and
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Is there any
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Police say killing of Devon teenager was planned

A 14-year-old girl who was found murdered at the weekend in Devon had her throat slit, it was disclosed yesterday. **Jason Bennetto**, Crime Correspondent, reports on the hunt for a killer.



Kate Bushell: Died doing a good turn

The attack on Kate Bushell as she walked a dog near her home on a country path was planned, police said yesterday. Her killer cut the girl's throat, almost certainly with a knife, and used great control and ferocity. She did not appear to have been raped, but detectives carried out tests to establish whether her attacker tried to assault her sexually.

The teenager's fully clothed body was found by her father on Saturday evening in a field 300 yards from her family's home on a housing estate at Exwick, on the outskirts of Exeter, after she failed to return from a walk. Detective Superintendent Mike Stephens said that Kate's throat was cut with a sharp instrument which has yet to be recovered.

"It was obviously a mindless, ruthless attack which ripped the girl's throat. It was a premeditated attack by a killer who had

control of themselves and the victim," he said. The killer could strike again, he added.

Samples of blood had been sent for analysis and police have contacted a criminal psychologist to help draw up a profile of the likely suspect. Kate, described as a caring, bright, music-loving youngster, was attacked while taking her neighbour's dog, a Jack Russell called Gemma, for a short walk along a path near Exwick Lane.

When she failed to return by 6.45pm, her

father, Jeremy, and mother Susan, began a search by car, then called the police when there was no sign of her.

Kate was found at 7.35pm by her father in the corner of a field which she had reached by climbing over a stile from Exwick Lane. The body was lying near a country path and was not concealed. Detectives believe Kate was murdered at the scene.

Some of her clothing was disturbed, indicating a possible sexual motive. Police estimate that about 100 people use the walkway each day.

Yesterday more than 100 officers continued the murder hunt and carried out house inquiries. The police appealed to householders to check their dustbins to see if anything had been thrown into them and asked them to look out for knives or blood-stained clothing. The dog involved has been examined forensically to see whether there were any DNA samples from the killer, but results are not expected for a few days.

There have been a number of reports about individuals spotted in the area at the time of the murder, but there are no positive leads.

Pupils at Kate's school have suggested establishing a memorial to her.

Purple passion puts Tango on top of the advertising world

The advert for Blackcurrant Tango has won nearly every advertising award in Britain. Last night it won the world's highest advertising accolade. **Paul McCann**, Media Correspondent, asks if advertising can be so good that it becomes art.



Purple reign: The Tango advert that beat 7,000 entries to the advertising world's most coveted prize

It's official. The Blackcurrant Tango television advert featuring a hysterical, xenophobic Tango spokesman running around in purple boxer shorts is the best advert in the world.

The advert, which first ran on British television last year, was the grand prize winner in the London International Advertising Awards last night. It beat 7,000 entries from 78 countries to win the coveted grand prize at a black-tie award ceremony.

The advert had already won its agency, HHCL Partners, the British Creative Circle awards and Design and Art Director awards earlier this year. It has also appeared on countless industry "advert of the year" lists.

The commercial was also one of the top ten most complained about adverts of last year. In all 68 people protested to the Independent Television Commission that it was insulting and xenophobic.

The advert featured mild-mannered Tango spokesman Roy Gardner reading out a letter from a French schoolboy who complains that he doesn't like blackcurrant. Prompted by this and a 'Tango scientist', Roy marches through his office getting angrier and

angrier until he is outside, stripping down to a pair of blackcurrant-coloured shorts.

The Tango spokesman then marches to a field supported by 400 cheering extras where a boxing ring is set up. Here he challenges the boy and the whole of France to a fight. As the camera pans back and the music swells the boxing ring is seen perched above the White Cliffs of Dover.

The ITC dismissed the complaints on the grounds that the humour of the commercial was in the same tradition of xenophobic British humour as Alf Garnett or Basil Fawlty.

The £500,000 advert received plaudits from outside the advertising industry when the Institute of Contemporary Arts included it in an exhibition this year to illustrate how art could come from commercial sources.

Kate Bush, curator of the ICA's Assuming Positions exhibition said the advert was used because it was technically brilliant as well as self-knowing: "It starts off dull and builds to a wonderful cinematic climax. You could read it as real laddishness and repugnant xenophobia, but at the same time you know it knows all that about itself and is a parody. This helps it transcend being an advert and becomes art."

Mike Cozens, creative director of rival agency Young & Rubicam, said: "It's been a great hit with punters as well as with advertising juries, which doesn't always follow. It's good to see such a mainstream brand like this winning awards for its advertising; it's often more obscure brands that win, which is sometimes questionable."

Runaway, 13, thought to be in Britain

The mother of a 13-year-old girl believed to have run away with a 47-year-old man she met in Spain has spoken for the first time about the affair. As **Kathy Marks** reports, she made an emotional appeal for her daughter to contact her.



Sally Claydon: Met man in Spain

Sally Claydon, 13, is thought to have gone missing with Bruce Alborough-Tregear, a British man whom she got to know while helping out in a bar run by her mother in the Spanish beach resort of Fuengirola.

Her friends have told police that she spoke to him twice on the telephone after returning from Spain two weeks ago. The second occasion was last Friday, the day before she disappeared.

Yesterday her mother, Sharon Walsh, 32, appealed at a police press conference in Harlow, Essex, for Sally, her only child, to get in touch. "No matter what she has done, I will always love her," she said. "I want to

know anything, even just to know she is alive. If she wants to go elsewhere or anything, as long as I know she's just out there, I just really, really want her to phone me or get someone else to phone me. She can come home and we can sort it all out."

Although Sally left with her summer clothes and passport, police believe she is still in Britain. She disappeared from her home

in Harlow while her mother, who is divorced from Sally's father, was out with her boyfriend, Mark McIntyre. Police have a note apparently written by the girl and handed to them by Ms Walsh. In it, she says she hates her mother and Mr McIntyre, but makes no mention of Mr Alborough-Tregear.

Police said they were also following a second line of enquiry based on suggestions that Sally could be with a different man who is nearer her own age.

Mr McIntyre, 43, told the press conference that he and Ms Walsh had not been aware of anything untoward between Sally and the older man.

Mr Alborough-Tregear, who is believed to use other names, had told the family he was divorced with grown-up children and had connections in the Wiltshire area. They met him again by chance on the ferry home.

Detective Inspector Graham Hancock said police wanted him to contact them, if only to say that he was not with Sally. "We are anxious to eliminate Bruce from our enquiries," he said. Interpol has been informed of the girl's disappearance and ports have been alerted.

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Lung cancer toll worsened by attitudes

Britain has one of the worst survival rates from lung cancer in the West. **Jeremy Laurence, Health Editor, finds the reasons are medical pessimism and smokers' guilt.**

Anti-smoking campaigns are adding to the suffering of smokers by making them delay seeking medical treatment out of embarrassment, according to a study.

Negative attitudes dominate the treatment of lung cancer in Britain which kills more people than any other cancer. Smokers feel guilty about having brought the problem on themselves, doctors feel there is no hope and there is little public interest in a disease that principally kills the old and the poor.

Launching a campaign to raise awareness of the disease by the Macmillan Cancer Relief charity, Dr Robert Milroy, consultant respiratory physician, said lung cancer was the most virulent of all cancers causing 100 deaths a day in Britain. Eight out of ten newly diagnosed sufferers, of which there are 40,000 a year, die within 12 months. Only one in ten survives five years.

Dr Milroy said the "clear impression" from international figures on lung cancer survival was that Britain came out near the bottom of the European league. Operation rates to remove the cancer were also among the lowest in Britain.

"If we could improve diagnosis we could improve surgery rates and extend survival. There has to be a change in attitude. For too long it has been regarded as an unfortunate disease of the poor and old which they have brought on themselves. Negative attitudes - that

nothing can be done - pervades attitudes to the disease. We need to get away from that."

Unlike other cancers there had never been a powerful patient lobby for lung cancer victims because of their poor survival. They died too soon and the disease was consequently neglected.

A survey by Macmillan Cancer Relief found that almost a third of lung cancer patients had delayed going to the doctor for up to four months despite having symptoms including coughing up blood, loss of weight and chest pains.

Only a quarter were referred by GPs to a specialist within a week, as the guidelines on treatment dictate, and some waited more than a month for the diagnosis. More than half complained they had had inadequate care from the NHS.

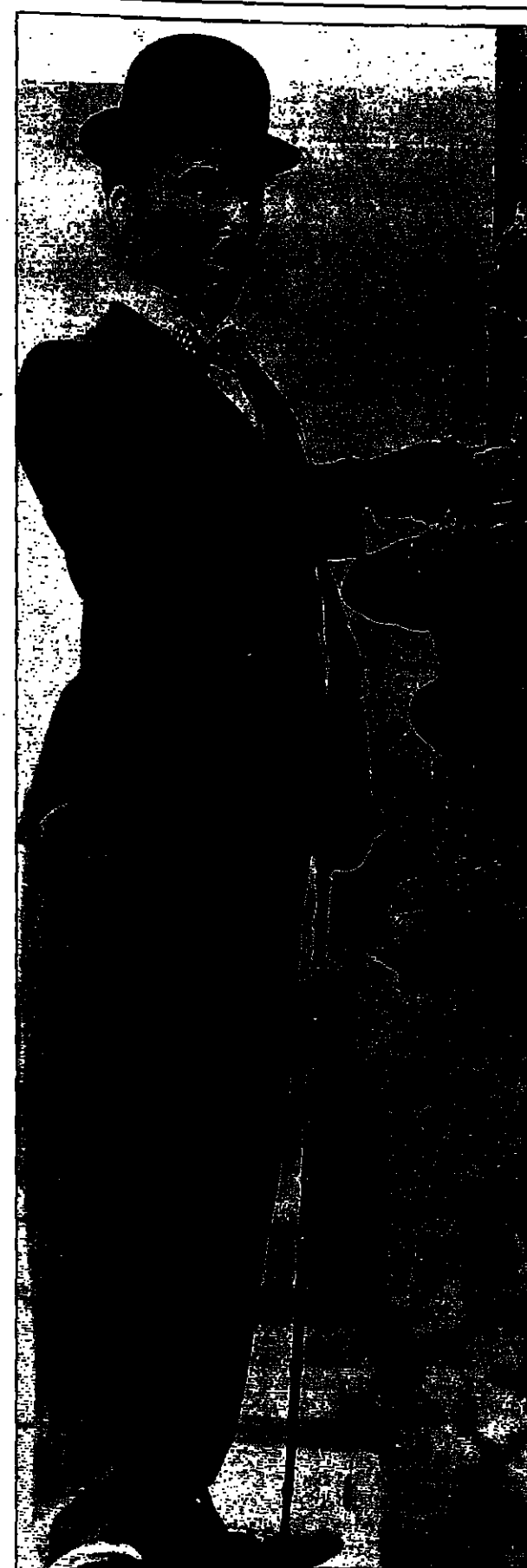
The campaign was launched as the Government announced the cost of smoking to the NHS was between £1.4bn and £1.7bn a year - more than twice previous estimates.

Tessa Jowell, the public health minister, said: "This is an appalling drain on the NHS and an enormous human cost to smokers..."

"We need tough action at both a domestic and European level to bring down rates of smoking."

Nicholas Young, chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Relief, said the campaign would aim to tackle the negative attitude to the disease which he described as the "forgotten cancer".

"High-profile anti-smoking campaigns engender guilt in lung cancer sufferers who become stoical and undemanding about their care. They are the largest group of cancer patients in the world and they are neglected."



Out of London: Charlie Chaplin, left, suppressed the film about his life, which focused on his humble origins south of the river. He was played by Chick Wingo, above, who is seen in the comic's childhood haunts. Photograph (left): MSI

Found: film Chaplin didn't find funny

A documentary film about Charlie Chaplin has come to light after 70 years. David Lister suggests that Chaplin kept the film out of the public eye because it stressed his working-class origins.

A warts-and-all documentary film about Charlie Chaplin, suppressed by him and never shown, has been found in a garage.

The 35mm silent film, created and produced in 1928 by Harry B. Parkinson, one of the pioneers of the film industry, provides a rare account of the comic's working-class childhood in south London, as well as some of the people and places that influenced him.

Most notably, the film suggests that Chaplin's hallmark boots and trousers were inspired by the everyday clothes he saw worn at East Lane Market in Lambeth as a child.

Chaplin, who had moved to Hollywood by the time the film was made, stopped it from being shown. It is likely he would

have been annoyed that it revealed so much about his poor origins. In addition, he probably did not enjoy the idea of someone playing him. The film uses a figure, largely shown in shadow, played by the actor Chick Wingo, pretending to be Chaplin visiting his old haunts.

The family of the late Harry Parkinson are selling the film at Christie's next month, after a family member found it on top of a cupboard in her garage.

During the 42-minute film, entitled *The Life Story Of Charlie Chaplin*, Parkinson draws comparisons between Chaplin's Beverly Hills home and the London streets where he grew up. Parkinson suggests that East Street, Walworth, south London, could have been the inspiration for Chaplin's film *Easy Street*. Background details of Chaplin's family are given, particularly his father's career as a music hall singer. There is footage of some of the local schools that Charlie Chaplin attended.

Images of London include his old lodgings in Pownall Terrace, Lambeth, Lambeth Baths and Kennington Park Gymnasium. Scenes of children playing

in the Lambeth streets are used by Parkinson to imply that Chaplin used the experience of his childhood in his characterisation of *The Tramp*.

There is approximately half a minute of newsreel footage of Chaplin's triumphant return to England in 1921; that is followed by footage of a garret room in Lambeth. Parkinson used the stark contrast between Chaplin's early lodgings and the splendour of his suite of rooms at The Ritz, where he stayed on his visit to London, to emphasise the change in Chaplin's fortunes.

Chaplin died in 1977 aged 88, two years after being knighted. Parkinson died in 1970, aged 86. His elderly relative who found the film, who does not wish to be named, said: "We always thought Chaplin had it banned because he was embarrassed about his poor background. When I was given the film I remember being told it would be worth a lot of money one day. But I forgot all about it... I didn't know what to expect, but it was wonderful to see it, with bits from his childhood together with clips from newsreel and bits from America."

EUROPE: A FORCE FOR FAIRNESS, EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN

The European Union has been a major force in helping women achieve the aims of greater equality and increased opportunity.

The Treaty of Rome, which Britain signed when we joined the European Union, established women's rights to:

- Equal pay for equal work
- Equal treatment at work including access to promotion, training, and working conditions
- Maternity leave and entitlements

Membership of the EU has also created job opportunities for British women. Programmes such as the New Opportunities for Women scheme aim to bring more women into the workplace. The EU has pledged to increase the number of women involved in public decision-making and in senior positions elsewhere. More and more women throughout the UK are using EU advice and funding to set up their own training schemes and networks.

The more that British women are aware of the advantages of EU membership, the more they will be able to benefit from them. We applaud the efforts of the current *Europe 97* campaign to make this information known.

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Affair in Bosnia led to wife's murder, court told

A senior RAF officer went on trial yesterday accused of murdering his wife. Kim Sengupta was in court as a jury was told an illicit affair in war-torn Bosnia led to the killing at a Suffolk lake.

RAF Squadron Leader Nicholas Tucker murdered his wife in a staged car accident after having an affair with a young Serbian translator he had met in Bosnia while serving as a UN observer, Norwich Crown Court was told yesterday.

Mr Tucker, a 44-year-old father of two teenage children, was "infatuated" with 21-year-old Djanina Dudakovic who was described as "very slim, very attractive with curly blonde hair". The prosecution claimed that it was this relationship which lay

behind the killing of 52-year-old Carol Tucker.

After meeting Ms Dudakovic, the RAF squadron leader applied to extend his tour of duty in Bosnia, the court heard. He stayed with her at the RAF club in Piccadilly, London, after helping her to come to this country on a short visit, and then killed his wife by driving a car into the River Lark in Suffolk, the jury was told.

Following the incident, Squadron Leader Tucker maintained the car had swerved into the water when his wife grabbed the steering wheel to avoid hitting a herd of deer. He was rescued with minor grazing to the forehead, while Mrs Tucker's body was discovered face down under a bridge, where police officers failed to resuscitate her.

A Home Office pathologist, David Harrison, concluded that Mrs Tucker had bruising on the left side of her chest "consistent

with recent finger pressure", grasp marks on her upper arm, and abrasions under her left arm. There were no marks on her neck, but the prosecution claimed that suffocation could have been caused "with a figure like an armlock" or "fingers, not dug in".

The fatal crash took place on the evening of 21 July, 1995, after Mr and Mrs Tucker had been out for dinner at the Red Lion, near Honington, Suffolk. After leaving the pub, Mr Tucker claimed he missed a turning before being forced to drive into the river. He told detectives that he was driving at around 50mph at the time of the accident. But police calculations show that the car had been travelling at less than 31mph and it had slowed to around 10mph when it hit the river bed.

Mr Tucker, of Honington, Suffolk, denies murder. The case continues.

Constable guilty of assault

A police constable was convicted yesterday of assaulting a student at a festival for the homeless, Paul Evans, 32, from Stoke Newington police station in London, was also convicted by a jury at the Old Bailey of affray.

Six other officers from the same station were all cleared of various charges relating to an alleged "brutal attack" they faced after the music festival for Hackney's homeless in north London in May 1994.

Police were called in after trouble allegedly erupted on the Saturday night. The defence claims that officers were called pigs and bastards and bottles thrown at them. Michael Austin-Smith QC, for Evans, said the officer "lost his cool" in the heat of the moment. He said the police had faced a "riotous situation. It was chaos".

The prosecution had alleged that Evans and other officers all from Stoke Newington police station had been involved in an unprovoked attack on festival goers and then tried to cover up their crime.

Evans, who will be sentenced today, was found guilty of assaulting Ben Swarbrick after the jury took seven days - deliberating for nearly 37 hours - to reach their verdicts.

Six other officers from Stoke Newington were all cleared of various charges relating to the festival. Evans was also cleared of other charges of alleged assault and false imprisonment. All seven officers were cleared of plotting to pervert the course of justice by writing false accounts of what had occurred.

Evans will almost certainly be thrown out of the Metropolitan Police following his conviction, and lose his pension. The acquitted officers will remain suspended until it is decided whether there are any outstanding disciplinary matters against them.

— Jason Bennetto
— Crime Correspondent

Danes buy Glenfeshie

Conservationists have lost out to a Danish family-owned company in their bid for the Highland Glenfeshie estate, it was revealed yesterday.

A multi-agency public bid was beaten by Danstrup Lund Holding A/S, owned by Klaus Helmersen, who is believed to have paid around £6m. The sale has angered conservationists who were hoping to save the 42,000-acre estate from potential harm because it is home to thousands of ancient trees. They claim its management is crucial to the success of maintaining the Cairngorms in order to achieve World Heritage Status.

The Ramblers' Association Scottish officer Dave Morris said: "It is a scandal that the Glenfeshie land lottery continues... Why should Scotland allow the heart of the Cairngorms to be placed at the mercy of anyone with a big enough cheque book to outbid the public purse?"

DAILY POEM

But for Lust

by Ruth Pitter

But for lust we could be friends,
On each other's necks could weep:
In each other's arms could sleep
In the calm the cradle lends:

Lends awhile, and takes away,
But for hunger, but for fear,
Calm could be our day and year
From the yellow to the grey:

From the gold to the grey hair,
But for passion could we rest,
But for passion we could feast
On compassion everywhere.

Even in this night I know
By the awful living dead,
By this craving tear I shed,
Somewhere, somewhere it is so.

Ruth Pitter was born in Ilford on 7 November 1897 and died in 1992. In the course of a long writing career she won the Hawthornden Prize, the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, and was made a CBE. To mark her centenary, Enitharmon Press have issued Ruth Pitter's *Collected Poems*, introduced by Elizabeth Jennings (£10.95).

Schools that have beat the system to make their mark

HOW THE BEST AND WORST COMPARE

Top 10 schools with the greatest sustained improvement (based on GCSE results between 1994-7 and including only schools which have improved each year. Excludes schools which entered fewer than 30 pupils.)

School	% point increase in GCSE score between 1994 and 1997
Harris City Technology College, Croydon	37%
Archbishop Temple School, Lancashire	35%
Bowland County High School, Lancashire	32%
Morpeth School, Tower Hamlets	29%
Bacon's College, Southwark	29%
Northampton (GM) School for Boys, Northants	28%
Chadwell Heath School, Redbridge	27%
Itstock Place, Wandsworth	27%
Lordswood Girls' School, Birmingham	26%
Ribston Hall High School, Gloucestershire	26%

Top 10 non-selective state schools at GCSE

School	Proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs at grade A*-C
Old Swinford Hospital, Stourbridge	98%
Walsford Grammar School for Girls	93%
The Coopers' Company and Coborn School, Upminster	92%
The Hertfordshire and Essex High School, Bishop's Stortford	90%
Walsford Grammar School for Boys	89%
Emmanuel City Technology College, Gateshead	89%
Coloma Convent Girls' School, Croydon	89%
St Albans Girls' School, St Albans	88%
Sexey's School, Bruton	88%
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith	87%

Bottom 10 non-selective state schools at GCSE

School	Proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs at grade A*-C
The Ramsgate School, Kent	1%
William Crane Comprehensive School, Nottingham	2%
Campton Boys RC Comprehensive School, Liverpool	2%
High View School and Technology Centre, Derby	2%
Our Lady of Fatima High School, Liverpool	2%
Copperfields College, Leeds	3%
Handsworth Wood Boys' Birmingham	3%
Amy Johnson School, Hull	4%
Skerton High School, Lancaster	4%
Pen Park School, Bristol	4%

Source of data: Department for Education and Employment

Educationists opposed to school league tables based on raw exam scores have hailed a league based on sustained improvement as a step in the right direction. But, ask Lucy Ward and Judith Judd, can the schools in the new table really be fairly compared?

The heads of two very different schools at the top of the new improvement league have one response in common to their sudden dose of public acclaim.

Both Lyndon Jones, principal of Harris City Technology College in Croydon, and Alasdair Macdonald, headteacher of Morpeth School, in east London, believe the table has provided well-deserved recognition for schools which have no chance of scaling the heights of the raw scores premier league, occupied by some of the country's most selective institutions.

However, while the two schools may both be making impressive headway, critics of the previous government's education policy claim they were never on the same starting line.

Harris, founded in 1990, is one of 14 CTCs - the business-sponsored brainchild of then-education secretary Kenneth Baker. With £1.25m over five years from its benefactor, the college was able to equip itself with 350 computers, a fibre optics network and - naturally - new carpeting for the former local education authority-run school whose buildings it took over.

Morpeth is housed mainly in 100-year-old red brick Victorian buildings in Bethnal Green. On its present roll, 70 per cent of pupils qualify for free school meals - three times the proportion at Harris CTC - while for some 60 per cent English is a second language.

For Harris CTC, Lyndon Jones points out, the sustained improvement which has seen



Top marks: Year 7 pupils at the Harris CTC in Croydon, south London, the country's most improved school

Photograph: Philip Meech

the college leap to the top of the Government's new league extends even further back than the chosen start date of 1994. In its first year, fewer than 12 per cent of pupils gained at least five good GCSEs, while this year 64 per cent achieved that target.

The principal attributes the improvement to teachers' hard work and dedication, combined with the influence of the business world. Lord Harris, the first chair of governors and still a board member, helped instill techniques borrowed from the boardroom including benchmarking and target-setting.

Mr Jones, like other CTC principals, gives short shrift to suggestions that the college's selection policy could have influ-

enced its impressive results record. Harris CTC selects a representative cross-section of abilities, but after that it sticks to its motto - "All can achieve".

In Bethnal Green, meanwhile, Morpeth school can safely guarantee its long climb to fourth in the improvement league has been achieved with no change in intake. The 40 per cent of pupils who gained five or more good GCSEs this summer were from a year group with an even lower ability profile than normal for the school.

The secret of success, says Alasdair Macdonald, was a reversal of the "anti-boffin culture" which prevented brighter pupils from being seen to work hard. Homework clubs and hol-

iday revision courses helped instill an ethos of hard work, and improved results followed.

The school may be a model in the Government's eyes but its head will not accept the New Labour view that poverty is no excuse for failure. "It is not an excuse but to say it has no impact is unfair and unjust," Mr Macdonald said.

Professor Peter Mortimore, director of London University's Institute of Education, agreed. "I have grave reservations about the use of crude league tables. Any exam table which doesn't reflect the different backgrounds and abilities of pupils coming into the school can't really be used to judge the quality of teaching."

Top five comprehensives at A-level

School	Average A-level points score (for pupils taking two or more A-levels: A-grade scores 10 points and E scores two)
Lady Manners School, Bakerswell	24.8%
King Egbert School, Sheffield	24.6%
Alager School, Stoke-on-Trent	24.2%
The Coopers' Company and Coborn (GM) School, Upminster	24.2%
Lady Lumley's School School, Pickering	24.0%
Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter	24.0%

Top five independent schools at A-level

School	Average A-level points score (for pupils taking two or more A-levels: A-grade scores 10 points, E scores two)
King Edward's School, Birmingham	36.9%
Withington Girls' School, Manchester	36.8%
King Edward VI High School for Girls	35.8%
The Lady Eleanor Holmes School, Hampton	35.3%
St Swithun's School, Winchester	34.7%



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No guarantees as Ulster pushes on the door of peace

Is the IRA falling apart? Will the Belfast political talks make headway? Our Ireland correspondent forecasts an eventful road ahead for the Northern Ireland peace process.

One wise old political bird, asked recently if he thought the peace process would work, smiled and said: "We should know within ten years." He was, he explained, not being facetious, but simply reflecting the fact that a return to violence will remain a possibility for many years to come.

The benign scenario for both the British and Irish governments is that the republican movement and the Ulster Unionist party remain intact and that, hopefully by next year, both may find it possible to subscribe to a new deal.

This could open the door to a new era in which both sides would feel able to subscribe to agreed new institutions. Yet even such a historic breakthrough would not guarantee peace, for there will always be the potential

as a partitionist arrangement is a problem for the future. For the moment, however, the IRA and Sinn Féin are engaged in a propaganda battle with the five dissenters about the extent of divisions.

The dissenters are not doing well. They were resoundingly voted down at an important IRA meeting; they seem disorganised; and they lack a single charismatic leader. They have also gone public with their criticisms, which does not go down well within the republican *omerta* culture; and they have wildly exaggerated their support, with the result that any future claims from them will be received with great scepticism.

They also face a republican leadership which has for more than two decades shown consummate infighting and manoeuvring skills within republicanism. But perhaps most tellingly of all they have not voiced an alternative to the Adams strategy: a simple cry of "back to the war" would find few takers.

Observers at all points of the political compass are watching for signs of further republican fissures, which cannot be ruled out. But as of now the odds are stacked against the dissenters.

While all this has been going on outside the talks, precious little has been moving within Stormont. The two governments and most of the parties have been in the same building but there has been, by all accounts, little or no meeting of minds.

While the Ulster Unionists have often been in the same room as Sinn Féin, they resolutely refuse to have any direct contact or dealing with the republicans. For many weeks now the parties have been setting out their positions in a generalised way. "We've just been surfing the agenda," as one delegate put it.

Many of the other parties criticise the Ulster Unionists for allegedly not taking the talks seriously enough. David Trimble rarely appears, they complain, UUP documents are so terse as to be almost contemptuous, and party representatives are said to be at times churlish and rude.

Part of the explanation for this may lie in the fact that Unionism has already experienced the type of split which the republicans are now trying to cope with. Mr Paisley and an ally, Robert McCartney, are campaigning for a complete Unionist withdrawal from the talks.

Yesterday the process moved into a different and potentially crucial phase, which may indicate whether genuine engagement and real horse-trading is possible within the present format. The next few weeks will see an intensive round of bilateral meetings as the chairman, former US Senator George Mitchell, and the British government probe for areas of possible flexibility and compromise. This may help show whether Unionists and republicans will be looking over their shoulders at their critics, or whether relationships can be established to make movement possible.

BY DAVID
McKITTRICK

for an unravelling of the process, beginning on either the republican or loyalist sides.

Still less are any guarantees available at the moment. No one can be sure that the republican movement will first of all stay in one piece, and then go on to accept a political settlement which will undoubtedly leave a border in Ireland.

Similarly no one can be confident that a deal palatable to republicans will also be acceptable to David Trimble's Ulster Unionists, subject as they are to constant flank attacks from the eternally dissident and dissonant Rev Ian Paisley.

On the republican side, however, those loyal to Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams are — so far at least — successfully holding the line against their internal dissenters. In the past few weeks they have lost up to a dozen Sinn Féin members in Co Louth in the Irish Republic, as well as five of the 13 members of the IRA executive, which is a sort of advisory board made up of distinguished IRA grey-heads.

There is a high degree of internal confidence in the Adams leadership. But below this there are undercurrents of worry at about an arrangement which would leave the border intact and the British still in Ireland. Republicans also grumble about what they characterise as lack of movement on issues such as prisoners.

Selling what the hardliners will denounce



Strike-force: The Cambridge United footballer Matt Joseph with Tony Banks, the sports minister, at the launch yesterday of the 'Show Racism the Red Card' campaign. Photograph: Brian Harris

Labour wants funding inquiry to be widened

Sir Patrick Neill's inquiry into political funding should cover commercial sponsorship of party events, Labour said last night, after MPs complained of firms "trying to buy favours" without actually giving cash. From Abrams looks at the growing list of firms prepared to hand out canapés to politicians.

On the Sunday morning of Labour's annual conference, delegates were treated to a free breakfast at one of Brighton's Grand Hotel. Gordon Brown provided the words of welcome and an arms manufacturer provided the croissants.

The Welfare-to-Work breakfast, paid for by British Aerospace, was just one of a growing number of party events with the mark of a commercial organi-

sation on them. Everything from wallets containing conference agendas to stairs in the conference centre can attract sponsorship.

Paul Flynn, Labour MP for Newport West, complained about the phenomenon at a Parliamentary Labour Party meeting last week. He has called for a full review of links with private companies.

"Granny Farms Incorporated and Crud Swallowers PLC have not suddenly been converted to the merits of fair pensions or the minimum wage," he said yesterday. "They are financing the Labour Party in order to buy favours from Government." Despite raising the issue before, he had received little encouragement from party officials.

In answer to a letter from Mr Flynn the party's finance director, Paul Blagbrough, insisted that the sponsorship arrangements were based on advice from Sir Gordon Downey, Parliamentary Commissioner

for Standards. They did not give "preferred access" to ministers and there was no need for a review, he said.

Last night, though, the party said it believed sponsorship should be included in Sir Patrick's inquiry. "We feel it's an area that will have to be looked at," a spokeswoman said. "We will make our contribution to the inquiry and await guidance from it when he concludes."

At this year's conference, long-term sponsors were joined by newer names. The Co-operative Wholesale Society, a traditional backer, paid £14,000 for plastic document wallets with its name on and a leaflet inside about its activities. Granada Television, which visits all the conferences, hosted a reception for North-west delegates and was delighted to win a few warm words from Tony Blair.

Other backers provoked more disquiet, though. Some delegates complained about the link-up with British Aero-

space, which sells Hawk jets to Indonesia. Last year there was similar comment after another arms manufacturer, Racal Electronics, bought space on each step of the conference centre staircase.

British Gas bought a table at a fund-raising dinner last year and visits all the conferences, while Mirror Group Newspapers, part owner of *The Independent*, regularly pays for a disco at Labour's gathering. A drugs company, Novartis, recently paid for an induction conference for new Labour MPs.

Others that have paid for drinks and canapés include Eastern Group, an electricity company, and the North and Mid Cheshire Training and Enterprise Council. Chris Blythe, chief executive of the council, which spent £4,500 on spon-

soring a regional delegates' event in Brighton, said he felt the money was well spent.

Last night the row over tobacco sponsorship of Formula One rumbled on as it was announced that the Public Health Minister, Tessa Jowell, would be called to explain the sport's exemption from a proposed ban to a Commons committee on European legislation.

Representatives of darts and other sports affected by tobacco sponsorship are to meet the Prime Minister after a promise by Peter Mandelson to the Tories' industry spokesman, John Redwood, in a television interview on Sunday. Darts representatives say that like Formula One their sport holds global events in Britain and is entirely dependent on tobacco sponsorship.

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Redwood takes up arms for coal

The beleaguered coal industry was yesterday championed by John Redwood, the Tory trade and industry spokesman. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on an alleged dash for gas.

A suggestion that BP "jumped the queue" with its bid to open a gas-fired power station at Saltend, near Hull, was pursued in a series of Commons questions tabled by John Redwood yesterday.

The Conservative trade and industry spokesman's interest in BP's activities was sharpened by his summer campaign to get Lord Simon, former chairman of BP and now a trade and industry minister, to divest himself of his BP shareholding.

In Commons questions yesterday, he picked up a suggestion made by RJB Mining, the coal group, that BP had seemed to jump a queue of 27 applicants waiting to build power stations. RJB objected to the BP proposal because coal-fired stations require about 3-4 million tons a year of coal for each

1,000MW of electricity generated, and it naturally opposes the gas-fired option.

But the most remarkable element of a statement issued by Mr Redwood yesterday was the fact that a Thatcherite Conservative frontbencher was lobbying a Labour government on behalf of the coal industry.

Mr Redwood said the Government had come to power on promises to help the coal industry and to promote environmentally green policies. "Now it is finding it difficult to do both at the same time," he said.

"I want to know why it has licensed BP to build a 1,200MW gas station. Why BP, and not some of the other 27 applications that are sitting on ministers' desks? Is the Government worried that permission for this station could close another coal mine when it comes on stream, displacing coal-fired power? How many more stations will it license in the dash for gas?"

Mr Redwood, who has become the most aggressive member of William Hague's opposition team, also asked why Tony Blair was not meeting representatives of the mining unions and mining company managements — as he had met Formula One motor racing bosses.

Citing tobacco sponsorship of sport as an example of the way in which the Government reached decisions, Mr Redwood said that was not the only case of decisions being taken by too few people, without proper consultation, in a hurry, and not properly reported to parliament. "Energy policy is another such matter," he said. "The coal industry deserves a hearing."

Hospital waiting lists keep rising

A rise in hospital waiting lists will be reported today. Health Secretary Frank Dobson will announce an action group to meet Labour's pledge to cut times, says Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent.

Teams of troubleshooters are to be appointed in the eight NHS regions in an attempt by Frank Dobson to get a grip on the waiting list figures which today will show a continued rise. Task forces will be sent into hospitals where the queues for operations such as hip replacements are the longest, to offer advice on how to reduce waiting times.

The Secretary of State for Health will also announce the creation of a national action group who will report to ministers. Members from the national group will act as leaders for each of the eight task forces.

The decision to appoint new teams underlines Government dismay at the continued rise in the waiting list figures. Mr Dobson blamed the numbers waiting for hospital treatment hit a record 1.1 million, but his tone will change today to express hope that the NHS might have turned the corner. He will announce that the latest quarterly figures

show the rise is continuing but it is beginning to slow. The appointment of the troubleshooters is intended to accelerate the turn-around, but it also highlights the deep concern in the Government to meet the pledge to reduce waiting lists, one of Labour's five key election promises.

The total number of patients waiting for surgery rose by 3 per cent to an all-time high of 1,192,700 for the quarter to August. Today's announcement will show that the rise has slowed to around 2 per cent in the quarter from July to the end of September.

Mr Dobson yesterday compared the waiting lists to a supermarket. He told MPs they would take a long time to slow and turn-around.

The Government came under fire from Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat spokesman on health, for failing to put more money into the NHS. "They will try to manage the waiting lists to pretend they have not gone up as much as they have been. That is because of the summer," he said.

Mr Dobson was praised by Labour MPs for pumping an extra £269m into the NHS from the defence budget to help hospitals avoid a crisis this winter, but ministers fear cold weather will see another sharp rise in waiting lists.

Such an increase could lead to renewed calls for rationing of care on the NHS, with some treatments being dropped from cover.

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THE PERSONAL NUMBER

Britain and US fear Saddam will be let off the hook

The United States and Iraq both appeared keen yesterday to step back from the belligerent rhetoric of recent days. But *Steve Crawshaw* says Washington and London are still determined not to be seen as 'going soft' on Saddam Hussein.

Britain rebuffed an attempted Iraqi compromise whereby some US weapons inspectors would be allowed back as part of a United Nations team. But the Foreign Office also spoke of "actively pursuing a diplomatic solution". British officials argued that

the proposals by Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, "indicate an Iraqi willingness to move". Reassuring words are intended to persuade Iraq that sanctions will not stay in place for ever. There can, in other words, be "light at the end of the tunnel", despite Iraq's repeatedly expressed fears to the contrary. British officials talked of drawing "a road map with greater clarity" on how to get the sanctions lifted.

Part of the new-look map might be what US officials called "modest adjustments" to the oil-for-food programme. Under the current terms of the programme, Iraq can sell \$2bn (£1.25bn) of oil every six months, with the proceeds controlled by the UN.

Iraq has said that Americans can come back in if there are an equal number of inspectors from other permanent members of the Security Council - Britain, France, Russia, and China. But British officials warned yesterday that President Saddam cannot be allowed to "discriminate" regarding the make-up of a UN team. They said there must be a willingness to comply with UN resolutions, in particular readiness to open up all weapons facilities for inspection in order to prevent the possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett, on a visit to Tokyo, argued: "I think that Saddam Hussein realises that he's gone a

step too far and made a tactical mistake and is looking for a way that he can back down and save his face." The French President, Jacques Chirac, congratulated himself on the easing of the crisis: "I have a feeling that the points I made have contributed towards what has developed today, towards some form of détente," he said.

Oil prices fell yesterday, on the perception that the crisis has begun to ease. The French Foreign Minister, Hubert Vedrine, said military action "remains possible but is not certain". He said he was convinced the US seeks a diplomatic solution, "because the situation would perhaps not be fundamentally changed by

military action". Arab leaders have shown little enthusiasm for the prospect of military action against Iraq.

Britain has been the only country to have backed Washington almost to the hilt, in its desire to punish Saddam, come what may. British officials continued to emphasise that an iron fist was still contained within the softer new glove. The emphasis was still on "readiness to consider use of force if all other measures fail".

Britain and the US have been keen to argue that all sides are acting in unison against President Saddam. In reality, military action would put intolerable pressure on the anti-Saddam alliance. Criticism

from France and Russia is now more muted only because both now believe military action is an unlikely option.

In Baghdad, President Saddam held a meeting with members of the Revolutionary Command Council to discuss the stand-off. According to the official Iraqi news agency, "the political situation was discussed and the letters sent to the President from his brethren Arab presidents and monarchs were reviewed." Russia's Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, talked of Russia being "active in many different areas". He emphasised: "We will do everything to find an exit to this crisis through the path of peaceful political settlement."

Nigeria's leader promises amnesty

Nigeria's military ruler dissolved his cabinet yesterday and said he was granting an amnesty for some political prisoners in a speech to mark the fourth anniversary of his seizure of power.

General Sani Abacha, speaking in a radio and television address, said his government had decided to free "those detained persons whose release would constitute no further impediment to the peace and security of the country".

Gen Abacha, whose government has been accused of holding hundreds of political prisoners, did not say which detainees, or how many, would be freed. He did not mention Nigeria's best-known prisoner, the businessman Moshood Abiola, who was the presumed winner of the aborted elections in 1993.

Gen Abacha also said he was dissolving his cabinet, noting that a number of officials had indicated that they wanted to play larger roles in Nigeria's political transition. Saying Nigeria was about to "embark on the final lap of the tenure of this administration", Gen Abacha said his move followed indications from ministers that they wanted to "fully participate in the political process".

He has promised to hold elections next year, handing power to a civilian government on 1 October. Pro-democracy groups, however, say he will probably orchestrate the election to ensure that he remains in power indefinitely.

The general also used his speech to attack Nigeria's independent media, which has faced repeated arrests and crackdowns, as well as to round on foreign critics of his regime.

— AP, Abuja



Hot work: Rescue worker Andy Darbyshire trying to keep a killer whale cool on a beach near Exmouth, Western Australia. Seven of the animals were stranded on the beach on Sunday. Three have been refloated but three have died, including this female's calf. Photograph: AP/Michael O'Brien

Pakistan's leader in court for contempt

Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif denied showing contempt for the judiciary yesterday when he became the first serving Prime Minister to appear on a contempt of court charge. Mr Sharif said in a statement that he had high esteem for the judiciary, with which he has been at loggerheads for months, but said: "I have neither committed contempt of court, nor do I intend to do that."

Mr Sharif sat in court with his entire cabinet when counsel read out the statement. The hearing was adjourned until today and Mr Sharif was unlikely to appear again, aides said. His remarks fell far short of the apology which some newspapers had said he would make to the court to take some of the tension out of the nation's political life.

The continuing confrontation with Mr Sharif's nine-month-old government has dominated political life and unnerved investors. The proceedings arise out of remarks Mr Sharif made when the supreme court suspended one of his first pieces of legislation which outlawed the practice of legislators changing sides, something that has bedevilled politics in the past.

Mr Sharif's statement said it was his duty to express his views on court rulings "in the light of varying opinions... It is unfortunate if in the performance of my duty towards these obligations, any of my statements has been deemed by any learned judge to be in contempt."

The Pakistani Prime Minister, who returned to power with a sweeping majority in February, has been at loggerheads with the country's chief justice, Sayed Sajjad Ali Shah, for months over a variety of issues.

— Reuters, Islamabad

The Big Crocodile Winnie comes out bites back at fighting in campaign for apartheid inquiry

Despite months of behind-the-scenes wooing, South Africa's former president, PW Botha, has said he intends to ignore a subpoena to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the body charged with exposing the truth about the country's apartheid past.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu yesterday said that if Mr Botha, 81, former leader of the National Party, refused to attend a hearing on the workings of the old State Security Council, he would be prosecuted. The commission is trying to establish how the council, which Mr Botha chaired, fitted into the chain of command that allowed atrocities to take place. Those who ignore the TRC's bidding face a fine, or two years in jail.

In an interview with the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport*, Mr Botha called the TRC a "circus". The Archbishop said he was sad Mr Botha appeared to have thrown down a gauntlet. He has visited Mr Botha at his retirement home to persuade him to co-operate with the Commission in the interests of reconciliation.

The TRC submitted questions for written reply, but Mr Botha missed the deadline. The commission offered to take the hearing to him after claims that he was too ill to travel to Johannesburg. "In showing this consideration for Mr Botha we have angered many South Africans who have accused us of being spineless for not unceremoniously calling him to account," Archbishop Tutu said.



Botha: Told commission to keep away from his home

In his *Rapport* interview Mr Botha warned the TRC not to come anywhere near his home. He was prepared to meet the Archbishop again in private, at the local museum, where they could have tea. It is difficult to imagine the Groot Krokodil (Big Crocodile), as Mr Botha is known, and the Archbishop chatting for long. "I am not asking for amnesty," he said. "I did not authorise murders and I do not apologise for the struggle against the Marxist revolutionary onslaught."

Mr Botha claims the commission is turning into a revenge campaign against Afrikaners. "The truth is simply that the commission does not bring reconciliation but is trying to tear the Afrikaner and the South African nation apart." He added that Afrikaners could not be expected to apologise for their existence or for struggling to find a place in the sun.

— Mary Braid, Johannesburg

Undaunted by accusations of murder, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela began her campaign for the deputy leadership of the ANC yesterday with a rare media interview in which she criticised her former husband's government for failing to deliver to the masses.

Mrs Mandela, who is standing for office in defiance of the ANC leadership, was interviewed in her mansion in Soweto. She was in rip-roaring form, attacking claims that she murdered the 14-year-old activist Stompie Seipei Mooketsi in her garden in the late 1980s.

She called Katiza Cebekhulu, the former bodyguard who recently claimed he saw her stab Stompie, a "liar and a lunatic". She dismissed Mr Cebekhulu's patron, the former British MP Baroness Nicholson, as a "mad cow". She cast aspersions on President Mandela for even looking at Mr Cebekhulu's allegations.

Mrs Mandela says there is conspiracy against her by those who dislike her preaching the "truth", which was that the ANC's "high-handed" leadership had failed the people. A "Winniephobia" campaign, she says, had been whipped up since she was nominated for the deputy post.

Mrs Mandela's bid for the deputy leadership, which would put her within striking distance of the presidency, has alarmed ANC leaders. All other candidates for the deputy's post have been forced to step aside in favour of Jacob Zuma, an



Winnie Mandela: says she is victim of a conspiracy

uncharismatic "consensus candidate" of whom the leadership approves. That makes the contest a two-horse race. Party officials can only hope the strategy succeeds. Earlier this year the leadership put up Mr Zuma's wife, Nkosazana, against Mrs Mandela for the leadership of the ANC's Women's League. Mrs Zuma was thrashed.

If the party is alarmed, white voters are yet more concerned. They remember her threat in 1986 that blacks would liberate South Africa "with our boxes of matches and our necklaces [execution in a burning tyre]".

Next week, Mrs Mandela will dominate the news when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission bows to her demands that the allegations against her be heard in public. Two weeks later, she will put herself forward for office at the ANC's conference at which President Mandela will stand down as party leader.

— Mary Braid

Japan to welcome Blair the good European

Tony Blair will visit Japan in January, Derek Fatchett, British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, announced in Tokyo yesterday.

Since Labour came to power last May, seven British ministers have travelled to Tokyo, a sign, Mr Fatchett said, of the importance London attached to relations with

Japan. While there had been no fundamental change in ties with Tokyo since Labour came to power, he believed Japanese officials felt more comfortable with Mr Blair's administration because it was more pro-Europe than the Conservative government of John Major, who visited Japan in 1993.

"If there is a difference [compared to the Major government] here in Japan it is that Labour is seen as extremely positive on Europe," Mr Fatchett said. The date of Mr Blair's trip has not been decided.

Britain has long been the top base in Europe for Japanese companies with interests there.

— Reuters, Tokyo

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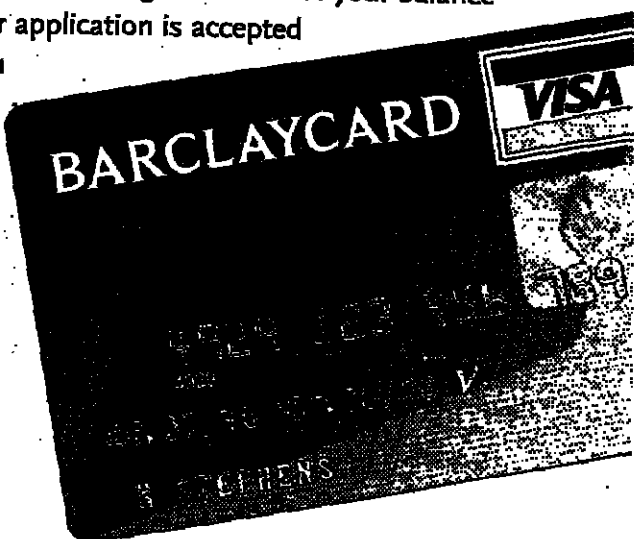
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Burgundy's soaring price bottles up trouble for future

Prices for the poshest Burgundies went through the roof at this year's charity wine auction in Beaune, one of the key events in the global wine calendar. The high bidding, mostly on behalf of foreign buyers, angered local producers, who fear it will discourage purchasers of cheaper Burgundies. With the 1997 Beaujolais nouveau arriving on Thursday, John Lichfield, in Beaune, samples the paradoxical state of the French wine industry.

Louis Trébuchet bought the most expensive items in the auction: two barrels of Batard-Montrachet at the equivalent of £50 a bottle. Afterwards, he was delighted and disturbed.

Delighted, because his firm, a local specialist trader, made it a "point of honour" to buy the most prized white wine in the annual charity auction of the *grands crus* from vineyards bequeathed over the centuries to the Hospices de Beaune. Disturbed, because the price he had paid, 152,000 francs (about £15,000) a barrel, was nearly double last year's price, confirming the sky-high trend in this year's sale.

"The wine I just bought is already paid for [by dealers in New York and Dallas]. But from the point of view of cheaper and medium-price Burgundies, the price is very worrying, even dangerous. The trend will put off buyers in the cheaper categories, where Burgundy is already suffering."

Mr Trébuchet said the high auction prices this year (47 per cent up on 1996 overall) reflected the potential quality of the 1997 vintage but also the weakness of the franc and the fact that "there is a lot of money in the world for luxury items at present". In Sunday's sale, barrels were marked down to buyers from 30 countries, including the United States, Japan and Britain (there were two successful bids by Sainsbury's), but also Russia, Taiwan and Singapore. There were ironic boos for the purchase of one lot of Savigny-les-Beaune



The Hospices de Beaune auction (main picture) is one of the highlights of the wine calendar. Above, local growers arriving for jollifications on Sunday evening. Photographs: Patrick Esgar

(a red Burgundy) by "Coca-Cola Japan".

Christian Flacelière, a wine writer, was even blunter about the foreign money on offer. "It's sad," he said. "With prices like that, people are going to turn to beer and processed drinks."

For whatever reason, and price is not yet a major issue, wine drinking is already collapsing in France. Consumption has fallen by half in the last 25 years. Two-thirds of French under 30 now reject wine as fat-

tening and old-fashioned. At the same time, the highest quality French wines are still enormously sought after abroad and - to the despair of some purists - production of the medium-range wines has been increased in the last decade.

Although on the surface, the French wine industry is doing well, helping to boost the country's record trade surpluses, there is concern that the growing dependence on foreign sales may prove destructive. The

three-day festival in Beaune - "les trois glorieuses de Bourgogne" - was, as ever, a joyous occasion. There were sampling tents for wines and cheese and charcuterie; there were wine-bottle-opening competitions; there were street performers in medieval garb, including one man who rolled drunkenly around town in a gigantic, round-bottomed barrel.

But beneath the surface jollity, there was anxiety. In Bordeaux, the great rival to

Burgundy, a controversy rages about the coarsening impact of American tastes, and especially the judgements of the US wine guru Robert Parker. It is alleged that some châteaux have abandoned the "subtlety" of French tradition for a more "vigorous" type of wine which appeals to America (that is, Parker). This was defined by one French critic as something which "strikes the palate like a dollop of wine jam".

Pierre-Henry Gagey, president of the

Beaune wine traders, swore to me - with perhaps a supercilious glance towards Bordeaux - that such antics would never be accepted in Burgundy. "A great wine must remain faithful to its *terroir* [locality]," he said. "The method of manufacture must express the qualities of the *terroir*, not blot them out."

The other export-induced threat to the character of French wine is the expansion of the areas now allowed to make *appellation contrôlée* medium-priced wine. In an interview with *Le Monde* at the weekend, the British wine writer Hugh Johnson, who is enormously respected in France, said the poor quality of some bottles under *appellation* labels was placing the reputation of French wine in the world "at very great risk". Some wine experts present in Beaune suggested that this was the real cause of the slow sales of cheaper Burgundies.

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Britain snubbed on single currency

Britain's attempt to avoid becoming politically sidelined in Europe was in difficulty last night, after France and Germany ruled out granting Britain a seat on a proposed economic council to be reserved for governments joining the single currency.

Bonn and Paris raised a new difficulty for the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, by suggesting that even listening to Britain's views on the new committee would be conditional on the country rejoining the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM).

Mr Brown, allied with finance ministers from Sweden, Denmark and Greece, all of whom are likely to remain outside EMU at the start in 1999, protested about plans to set up the body, to be known as "Euro-X". If the committee is to be launched, the British, Greeks, Swedes and Danes want observer places, arguing that its deliberations could have a direct impact on their economies.

But French and German ministers said the difficulties they faced were of their own making. Theo Waigel, the German finance minister, said "nobody could prevent" the euro-zone countries from launching their own informal consultations outside the framework of the EU treaty.

— Katherine Butler

Euro starts to score better marks with the Germans

German angst over the impending abolition of the Deutschmark is dissipating, according to polls published yesterday by *Focus* magazine. For the first time, one survey shows those supporting European monetary union outnumber the euro's opponents.

Euro-sceptics across the EU have drawn hope in the past from Germans' apparent resistance to doing away with their most potent national symbol. The German parliament has the right to veto membership of Emu. But German voters have always been ambivalent. Whilst many have objected to the euro, most have always expressed a conviction that monetary union will take place, regardless of their views. Attempts by the opposition Social Democrats to appeal to "Deutschmark nationalism" have failed.

The latest polls show that euro-fatalism is slowly turning into support. According to a survey of 3,500 people, conducted by the conservative Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Foundation), the proportion of Emu opponents has shrunk in one year from 63 to 45 per cent. Almost 9 out of 10 were convinced monetary union would take place. "The breakthrough to acceptance has come," commented the think-tank's chairman, Günter Rinsche.

Even more encouraging from the government's point of view is a survey carried out by the respected Allensbach Institute which found that 55 per cent were in favour of Emu, with 45 per cent against.

The key factor in the change of attitudes is the growing realisation that the common currency may not be inferior to the

Deutschmark. Although no German believes the euro will be "harder" than the mark, the proportion who fear a much softer currency is declining.

Pollsters attribute this to a growing awareness that the new monetary order in Europe will still be governed from Frankfurt, very much on the terms of the disappearing Bundesbank. The establishment in the summer of the German-inspired "stability council" marks the turning point.

The pollsters are also discovering that some assumptions about the mark's enduring popularity have been a myth. While the older generation associates the post-war currency with economic success, younger Germans appear to have no hang-ups about swapping one type of coin for another.

— Imre Karacs, Bonn

Left-wing mayors clean up in Italy

The outgoing left-wing mayors of Rome, Venice and Naples romped home to stunning re-election victories according to results published yesterday, in a glittering demonstration of the notion that a little administrative competence goes a long way in Italian politics.

While the country's centre-left government tried to take the credit and political analysts predicted a leadership crisis in the opposition, the deeper truth was that Messrs Rutelli, Cacciari and Bassolino were rewarded for at last trying to stop the rot in three of the world's most beautiful but traditionally worst-administered cities.

Francesco Rutelli, a media-conscious Green, has scrubbed Rome's filthy church façades clean, introduced electric public transport and replanted parks that had been reduced to barren ashtrays strewn with broken glass. Massimo Cacciari, a misanthropic philosopher, has dredged Venice's canals and tried to halt the decline in the city's population. Antonio Bassolino has built up star status by giving Naples some of its self-confidence back and attracting tourists to its freshly scrubbed old centre. All three men won over 60 per cent.

— Andrew Gumbel, Rome

Europe pays farmers billions for non-existent losses

The European Commission will be blamed today for handing out billions of pounds to farmers to compensate them for losses they never suffered.

Presenting the annual report to the European Parliament from the EU's spending watchdog, Bernhard Friedmann, president of the Court of Auditors, will single out British handling of BSE-related payments for particularly strong criticism.

Under a scheme for slaugh-

tering cattle over 30 months old, British farmers were to receive £270 per animal only after incineration. But the auditors have found that although claims for 1 million animals were made by end of last year, only 27,000 were incinerated. The British authorities also allowed older cattle, potentially carrying a risk of infection, to be put on the market with EU aid.

The EU's chief auditor has refused to certify the bloc's annual accounts for the third year

running, because of such lax control over taxpayers' money.

The report says poor book-keeping, erroneous payments, waste and fraud meant £2.8bn - 5.4 per cent of the total £52bn budget - could not be properly accounted for.

Mr Friedmann will tell the European Parliament that the court was unable to find any audit trail for an alarming 4.3 per cent of transactions checked.

He will blame the authorities in EU states for failing to ex-

ercise control over the revenue they collect on behalf of the Community, or the cash they pass on to farmers, job trainees, small businesses, local authorities and other beneficiaries.

Big cereal landowners, many in Britain, were over-compensated by £2bn and beef producers by £550m.

Cheque-in-the-post style payments introduced by Brussels in 1992 were intended to offset projected price drops. But market prices, particular-

ly for grain, rose from 1995 and the system places no ceiling on the amounts individuals can claim.

EU grant aid programmes to help poorer regions also come in for censure. Small companies receive special aid, but the auditors reveal there is no definition of a small company, so that big corporations sometimes qualify.

In Spain, a £2m grant for a skilled trades scheme was spent on a computer centre for the

company supposed to be implementing the project.

The auditors also blow the whistle on members of the Economic and Social Committee, a Brussels-based consultative body made up of interest groups, employers and trade unionists. Forty were found to be fiddling their travel expenses over a three-month period last year at a cost to the taxpayer of around £2m.

— Katherine Butler, Brussels

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The castle on steroids that glitters anew

The Royal Family will on Thursday celebrate the golden wedding of the Queen and Prince Philip in the state dining room at Windsor exactly five years after it was gutted by fire. Stephen Goodwin, Heritage Correspondent, toured the castle where glory has replaced devastation.

Gorgeous George IV would have loved the curtains. The flounce and ostentation is back in his crimson and green drawing rooms at Windsor, where the original exuberance has been restored to the valances, tassels and gilt after decades of a shrunken, dowdier appearance.

"Architecture on steroids," was the apt description by Jane Bright, a specialist in curtain decoration. It applies to all of the "semi state rooms" - these drawing rooms, the state dining room, the octagon dining room and the China corridor - which will be open to the public for the first time after Christmas.

The huge tassel order went to Portugal, about the only craftwork done outside Britain. Silk damask cost £78,000, the curtain trimmings £36,000 and 500,000 leaves of gold were used to gild the ceilings.

St George's hall, where the

blaze raged from end to end of the 180ft roof void, will be re-opened in an airy form not familiar to George IV. And in an all-but-new private chapel there is stained-glass based on a sketch by Prince Philip, who had overall charge of the restoration.

On 20 November 1995 nine principal rooms and more than 100 others were damaged in a fire which lit up the Berkshire sky. It started in the private chapel where paintings were being inspected while rewiring was underway. Someone screamed "get the paintings out" and all but one of the works of art in the main rooms were saved.

Servants of the royal household were yesterday preening themselves on the fact that the "Windsor job" had been completed six months early and for £3m under its £40m budget. "The restoration has been undertaken at no extra cost to the taxpayer," emphasised officials. That is not to say at "no cost".

In the face of public indignation, the Queen released the Tory government from its promise to pay for the repairs and agreed to meet 70 per cent of the cost. The other 30 per cent comes from the annual government grant to the Royal Household property section.

The style of the restoration is pretty much what one might have expected from the House of Windsor. As Prince Philip pointed out, a complete re-



Downesian gothic: St George's hall, redesigned by architect Giles Downes. The low, dark wood ceiling has been replaced with one more lofty in the most ambitious piece of green oak joinery since the 16th century; craftsmen used 350 Hertfordshire oaks felled in 1995. Tracery and panelling match the roof beams
Photograph: Andrew Buurman

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Lottery handouts for arts shrink

The curtain came down on huge lottery handouts for the arts in England yesterday when the Arts Council declared a £15m ceiling on individual grants for the next eight years. The Government's introduction of a "sixth good cause" - youth and training - cut its cash from £250m a year to £200m.

The Arts Council of England said it would be more "strategic" in targeting lottery funding in future, balancing regional and national needs.

Of the £1bn in capital grants over the next eight years, £200m has been earmarked for projects over £15m - and will barely cover schemes already in the pipeline. The South Bank Centre in London, the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, Bristol's Harbourside Centre and Gateshead's Regional Music Centre are likely to account for that cash, if their bids are successful.

Jeremy Newton, the Arts Council's National Lottery director, said: "There simply is not enough money to meet demand."

Wildlife charter

Twenty-two of Britain's nature organisations yesterday called for new wildlife legislation to save precious species and habitats which are being lost.

The Wildlife Trusts, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Friends of the Earth and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) were among those who called on the Government to live up to its election manifesto commitment for tougher action.

They published a wildlife charter to show what should be done, including legal muscle to protect sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs), hundreds of which are damaged every year. It wants lists of protected species to be updated to include creatures such as the water vole, the fastest-declining native mammal, and calls for the introduction of special areas for important marine wildlife, which currently receives hardly any protection at all.

— Louise Jury

BA's new airline takes on no-frills operators

British Airways announced yesterday it will launch a low cost airline to compete with no-frills carriers. Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent, examines BA's newest addition to its fleet.

BA's plans, revealed exclusively by the Independent on Sunday last month, will see the new operator, codenamed Operation Blue Sky, fly from London Stansted.

BA has been squeezed by smaller operators - which have been able to offer cheaper fares by flying from less expensive, less congested airports and cutting out extras such as meals.

Their success has been remarkable. Ryanair, which also operates from Stansted, earlier this month announced a rise in half year profits from £9.4m to £17.3m. In just 24 months, Easyjet - which runs flights from Luton - has taken 32 per cent of the market on the London to Nice route.

The upstarts are nervous that BA's plans are nothing but a front to run them out of town. Tony Anderson, Easyjet's marketing director, said: "They must be able to prove they're doing it to make money, not just to drive us out of business." Easy-

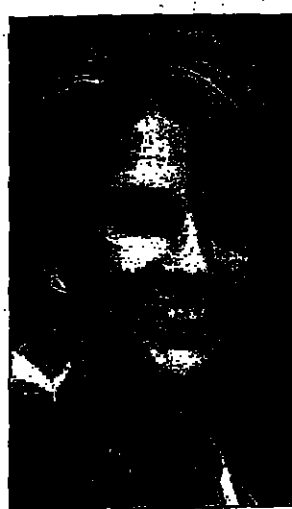
jet and Debonair Airways are both considering legal action.

The new company, which will be wholly-owned by BA, will have its own name, identity, management and employees. It will not use travel agents. Passengers will book by credit card on the telephone, and can expect a "frugal flier" service, with no meal and perhaps one complimentary drink.

BA are coy about the details. Barbara Cassani, formerly in charge of the airline's US operations and in charge of the new carrier, will only say that fares will be "competitive" and that the new airline will fly to cities in Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, France and Germany by the end of the first year. More than 150 new jobs are expected to be created when the aircraft launches "early next year".

Mrs Cassani will compete not only with low cost rivals - but with traditional BA flights from Heathrow and Gatwick. "This has to be a stand alone company that makes money," said Mrs Cassani. Initially, the new airline will lease eight 737 aircraft - which each carry about 130 passengers - and will fly three times a day to European destinations. "We have very clear financial targets," said Mrs Cassani. "I have to break even and move into profit by 2001."

THE FIRST LADY OF FLIGHT



Britain's new first lady of flight is inappropriately American. Barbara Cassani, 37, (left) was hand-picked by Bob Ayling, BA's globalist chief executive, to run the flag carrier's new low-cost carrier.

Picked from New York, the airline executive is as feminine as she is feisty. She charms reporters in conversation as quickly as she puts them down. A mother of two - who is married to an English investment banker - she eschews the antics of her better known rivals at Virgin. "I won't be jumping out of a cake at the launch party," she dryly remarks.

Little more could be expected of someone who after Princeton, worked as a management consultant at Coopers and Lybrand and started with BA soon after it was privatised in 1987.

Big things are expected of Mrs Cassani. With BA lacking any director with any real stage presence, this high-profile job could prove her ticket to the top.

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The map on this page, published today by the independent monitoring group Human Rights Watch, graphically illustrates the West's failure in Bosnia. Nato knows the location of over 40 men wanted on war crimes charges, but the S-For peacekeepers have attempted just two arrests since the end of the war. Andrew Gumbel reports on the West's unfinished business in the Balkans.



In the swirling cauldron of rumours, conspiracy theories, whispers and lies that bubble away in Bosnia, no hot tip has surfaced so frequently, or so insistently, as the story of Radovan Karadzic's imminent arrest. Back in July, it was said the former Bosnian Serb president was so scared of being betrayed that he had replaced his entire 50-strong personal bodyguard.

The fact is that Mr Karadzic remains at large, barred from public office but still able to manipulate his political and business interests from behind the scenes. Free, too, are many of his former associates accused of setting up concentration camps and massacring Muslim civilians in their hundreds and thousands – some of them living openly in eastern Bosnia. And free, as well, are a clutch of Muslims and Bosnian Croats who appear on the indictment list issued by the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague but whose names have

What the Human Rights Watch map illustrates is that many of the suspects live within a stone's throw of S-For bases. True, S-For's mandate insists that indictees should be arrested only if encountered in the course of normal duties, but testimony from several different sources suggests such encounters are frequent and even, on occasion, downright chummy. "The map shows that Nato's failure to arrest has nothing to do with its inability to locate indicted persons," said Human Rights Watch spokeswoman Holly Cartner. "It's a grievous failure of political will."

notions of independent justice stand much chance of being understood, and any arrest is bound to be interpreted as a political act, even if it is not meant that way. The international community has responded in kind, using arrests or the threat of them as a means to achieving progress on other fronts, such as media freedom or dialogue between the former warring factions.

The problem with such an approach is that it confirms the suspicion of Bosnian Serb nationalists that the Hague tribunal is an international conspiracy. And it also risks deferring arrests almost indefinitely. In July, S-Far arrested one suspect and killed another in the northern town of Prijedor, but nothing similar has materialised since. According to some sources, Mir Karadzic's arrest was deferred during the summer because of the impending local elections. Then the moment of truth was put off again while international negotiators installed a multi-ethnic council in the disputed town of Brcko. This weekend's Bosnian Serb parliamentary elections and next month's presidential poll may prove to be further excuses.

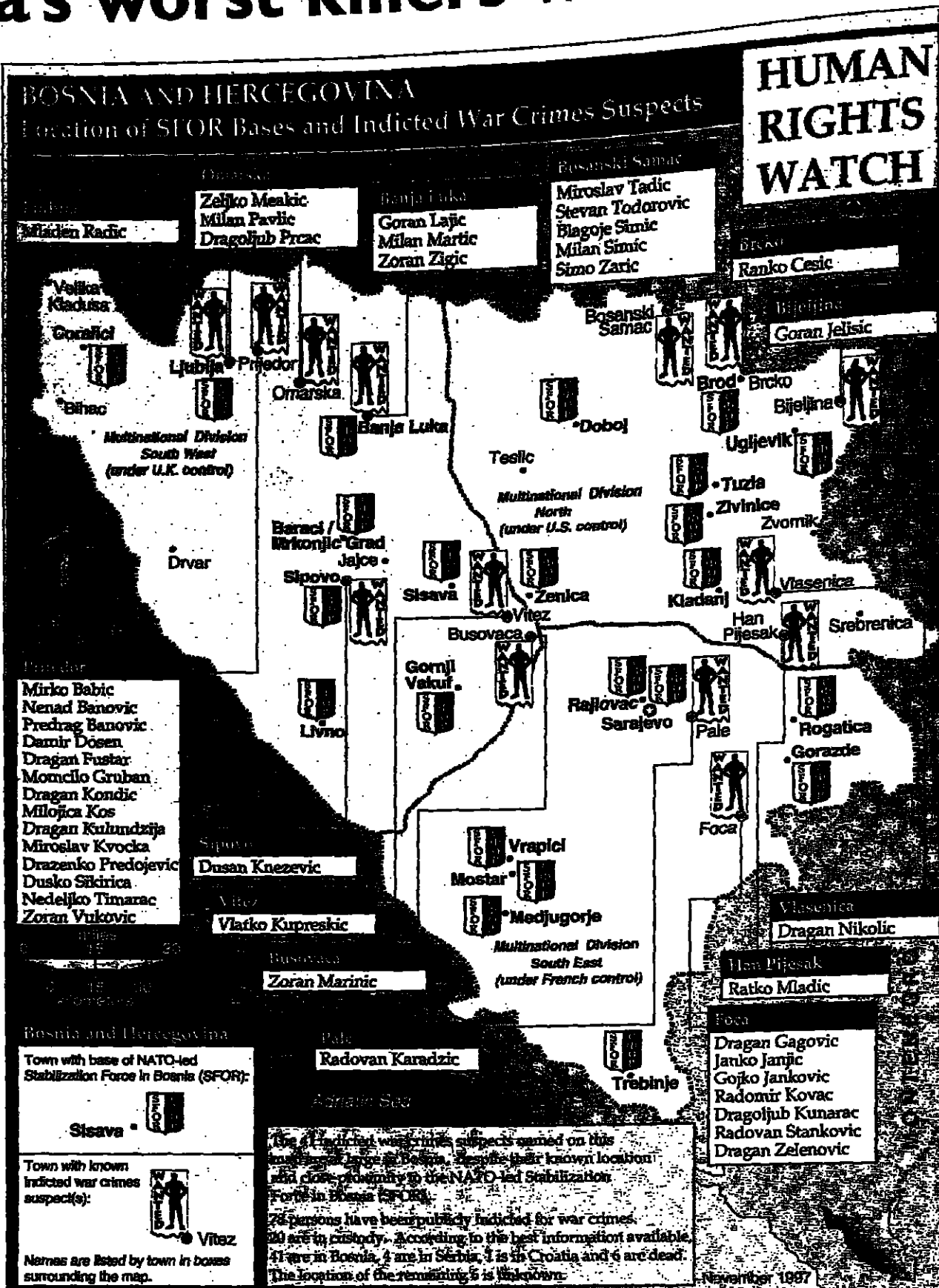
All this might be fine if arresting war criminals was merely a matter of honour, but there are stronger reasons to act quickly. Many of the worst Bosnian Serb offenders are part of a huge smuggling and extortion racket run by Mr Karadzic and his associates. Prospects for injecting a modicum of democratic pluralism into Serb-held Bosnia depend in part on dismantling this structure and rounding up the ring-leaders.

All sides in Bosnia need to face up to the horror of what happened if they are to soften the nationalist policies which created the conflict in the first place. And there has been progress recently, in spite of S-For's inaction. Some Serb and Croat militia members have recently confessed to horrifying crimes and willingly given themselves up to local courts. And an independent magazine in Sarajevo, *Dani*, has published detailed reports of murders carried out by Muslim militias against Serb civilians.

THE HAGUE: The United Nations war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia, created four years ago, is at last fully operational and able to concentrate on prosecutions, the outgoing president Antonio Cassese said yesterday. Addressing international digni-

ZAGREB: Police in the eastern Croatian town of Vukovar, which fell to Serb forces six years ago, have increased security following two bombings and other incidents at the weekend, a UN spokesman said. The bombings, at a school and a municipal building, caused damage

but no casualties. After Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia, local Serbs backed by the Yugoslav People's Army took the town on 18 November 1991. The surrounding area has been administered by the UN since January 1996 but is due to be reintegrated into Croatia next year.



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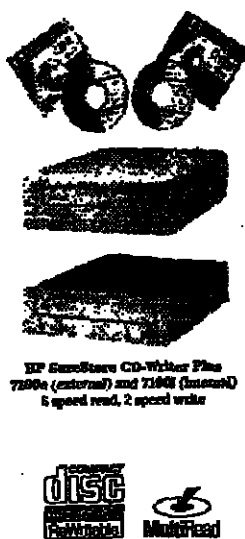


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shows identical and
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apart says
the same.

S.A.D.

FEDERAL

When it comes to sex, there's nothing quite like an honest Puck

'Every time a child says "I don't believe in fairies," there's a little fairy somewhere that falls down dead' (JM Barrie, 'Peter Pan'). In which case, over at the Royal Academy, they must be dropping as fast as flies in a Damien Hirst vitrine. For, as Tom Lubbock observes, it takes an adult imagination to appreciate the erotic potential of fairyland.

Do you believe in fairies? WB Yeats had a robust answer for the scoffers. "Imagination!" he would say with a withering contempt. "There wasn't much imagination when Farmer Hogan was dragged out of bed and thrashed like a sack of potatoes. That they did... they had 'um out, and thumped 'um, and that's not the sort of thing a man wants to imagine." I don't know whether this shows that Yeats was himself a believer, but it was an effective retort, because it made the sceptics look like the airy impractical ones; it was they, with their ideas of dainty, diaphanous entities, who were in thrall to a fancy.

It was a fancy partly created by the sort of images to be seen in "Victorian Fairy Painting" at the Royal Academy. This is a curious show, valuable in a way, because it focuses on pictures that - like

the fairies themselves - one is likely to dismiss as trifles; and, although the genre didn't produce more than a few good works, it was extensive, and part of a wider fairy cult that thrived through all the arts in the middle of the 19th century, and so needs reckoning with. The odd thing is that it was addressed to adults and didn't become child-centred until later in the century. And, dwelling on these teeming scenes of fay life by such as Joseph Noel Paton and John Anster Fitzgerald, you can't help asking how seriously, with what kind of seriousness, they're to be taken.

Literal belief seems not to be the issue, though no doubt the thought that some people did believe in them helped the subject

plained, urban, industrialised world. There's an implied cry of "Nay, thou shalt not rob life of its enchantment, O base utilitarian!" But it was more than a consoling game of let's pretend. It was, to use that shifty modern idiom, a myth - a fiction with deep and varied satisfactions, erotic, patriotic and spiritual.

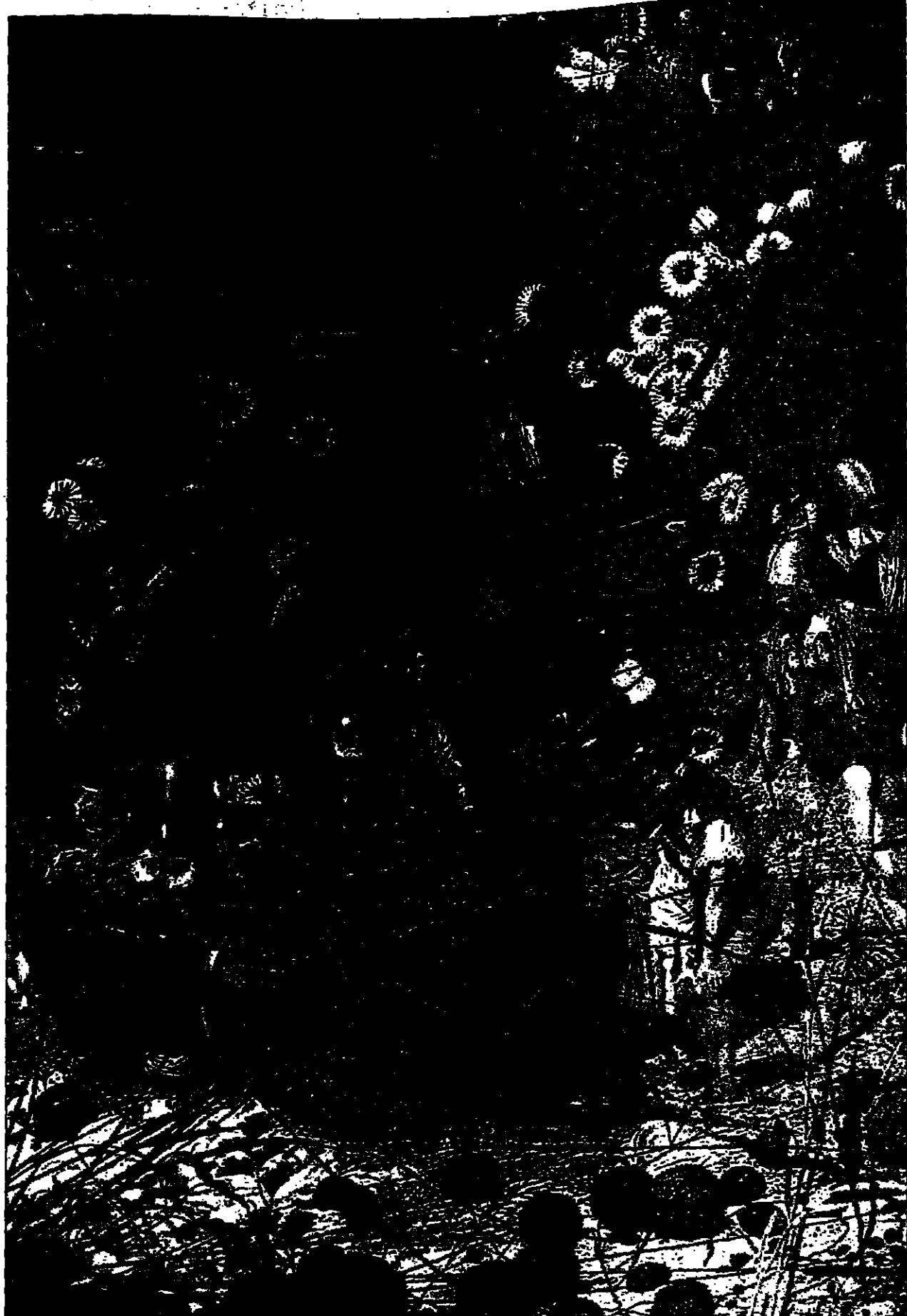
The Fairy was re-invented for the purpose. Blake and Fuseli (important progenitors, not in the show) had added butterfly and insect wings to the traditional little people, a graft from mythological representations of Psyche. The newly devised point-work of the ballet inspired their light, twinkling-toes gait, very far from Yeats's thumpers. Theatre generally, with its extravagant spectacles,

which go dink, dink, dink through the pervading darkness, the delicacy with which the flora (a dew-dropped leaf, a curling catkin) just touch the pool-smooth patch of ground - these tentative devices match and stress the light tread of the fairy feet, and the brevity of the vision.

Danby's low-down close-up allows scale-jumps to go both ways. The people are little, but he's equally interested in vegetation that looks real but unnaturally magnified. So the supernatural is made one with a naturalist's close observation, and made persuasive. The effect is quite lost in Paton's populous, wide-view tableaux, where the emphasis is all on human scales. But there, like other painters, he has fun. The fairies are small, but then come in all sizes, and this lets him cram his scenes with proliferating, ever-minuter detail, like a fractal picture, which leaves the most patiently head-counting viewer - and you have to be that kind of viewer to enjoy his paintings at all - feeling that some really tiny ones have still escaped view. So, even though the rendering is very clearly realised, Paton can retain a sense of fairy elusiveness by making them vanishingly small.

But we'd be inclined to say that Paton's sustaining interest, and the genre's as a whole, is erotic. Fairies are a way of creating innocent, low-gravity orgies, waves of closely thronging flesh. Of course fairies are traditionally sex-related - as in the *Dream* - but it's disconcerting to see it pictured. There's something rather icky about a sex-object only a few inches high (what do you do with it exactly? Just kind of finger it?) or in the idea of moving your hand through a cluster of minuscule, wriggling bodies, or being swarmed all over. When the subject is Titania's dallying with Bottom (in Landseer's picture, say) the fairy Queen is shown human size, so as to remove these feelings; or, again, you can do a fairy just as a normal female nude with wings and something to indicate scale (as in John Simmons's *Titania*). But often the artists seem to emphasise how one might feel about fairy bodies by giving them a not quite human anatomy - slightly elongated, tapering, but with very solid thighs. They want it both ways, dainty and voluptuous too, and you're not quite sure if this is meant to be super-feminine or grotesque.

The big change of gear comes with Fitzgerald, and although he's very weird, it's a less troubling weirdness, because much more explicit. His fairies aren't conceived as real, tangible bodies. They're overtly psychological - not literary or folkloric, but mind figments, the products of bad dreams and laudanum hallucinations. A series of pictures has a sleeper (the artist or a young woman) troubled by impish visions, with the imagery drawing much on Bosch. The conception is avowedly sinister and grotesque, which actually diminishes both those qualities. And in his pure fairy scenes, spiky and luridly coloured, while he gets quite close to surrealists like Leonora Carrington, he also points to the child's fairy. These creatures are elaborately dressed from a botanical costume box, and their behaviour suggests children at play, not a perversely miniaturised adulthood.



The one acknowledged masterpiece of fairy art: Richard Dadd's 'Fairy Feller's Masterstroke'; and 'a limpid moment of moonlit stillness' from Francis Danby's 'Scene from A Midsummer Night's Dream' Tate Gallery; Oldham Art Gallery

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Puck

I was a bad girl, a blank who didn't fit in. I lied to my mum, bunked off school – and got discovered

The time: May 1994
The place: Hammersmith Tube station, London
The woman: Shola Ama, singer

At fifteen, I was a bad girl hanging around with a lot of criminals. My boyfriends were stealing cars – I never got involved myself but when you're young, you're attracted to the excitement. I had a lot of trouble at school because I couldn't keep my mouth shut. I would often get sent out of class for swearing at the teacher. I did some sad, sad things like getting drunk on cider and throwing food in restaurants – I hope those people won't remember me.

My mother is Dominican / St. Lucian, she's black and my dad's Scottish and white. It was difficult growing up mixed race. I remember when I was really young, looking at the mirror and wondering if my skin colour would change when I'm older – will it finally decide what it wants to be? It felt like a really nothingness race to be – a blank. I felt really alone, I had cousins who were mixed race but they all looked Italian to me. I was the odd one out. People would ask, "Are you black or are you white?" I thought, "Why do I have to decide? I'm both."

My mum would play jungle and drum and bass music while I locked myself in my room with Mariah Carey – so she was listening to far hipper music than me. Pop music was a form of rebellion for me, because I've always wanted to be different. I used to get tapes and sing over them, forgetting completely that anybody else was on the track. That was how I started writing my own music.

When I was 15 I looked at my room and thought it was time for a change. I had Madonna everywhere: on the ceiling, on the chest of drawers, a bed cover, towels, cups and everything. It was so embarrassing, so I took the lot down, painted the room pis-

tachio green and started to seriously get into music for the first time.

It is such a terrible story, but I can't lie; on the day that changed my life I bunked off school to go and see a guy in prison. My mum said: "If you miss school to see that criminal, that will be it. You will not go out for two months!" I got up and left the house at the normal time but went to see this boy's sister. I dressed up and she fixed my hair because I really fancied him. It was a real proper visit with me, his mum, sister and best friend.

I was so excited about seeing him that on the way I started singing: "I'm going to see my boyfriend." As we went through the barrier at Hammersmith Tube station, I changed to "Anytime You Need A Friend" by Mariah Carey and the acoustics in the station meant my voice went round the tunnel. I wasn't showing off, I just loved the way it sounded.

A guy in a bright purple shirt, with dreads and chains came up to me and started looking down at me. I thought: "Who is this weirdo?" He stood there with his personal organiser, he bit his finger and was really unsure of what to do. He asked me to sing something else, but I was certain that he was a pervert who was trying to get my number! However, when he told me his name was Kwame and that he played with a group called D'Influence I felt more at ease. I had seen them playing live at Wembley Arena as the support band for Michael Jackson, so I felt I could give him my telephone number. It might have been too trusting but I thought he couldn't kill me over the phone! I got on the train and forgot all about it.

I was more excited about visiting my boyfriend, because I'd never been on my own to a prison to see somebody. However, when I actually sat there, it was really sad – especially saying goodbye, knowing he was going back to his cell while I was going home.



Shola Ama: 'Fame makes it hard to have a relationship. If a man knows there's nothing he can do for a woman he'll feel insecure and treat her like dirt.'

Photograph: Andrew Bourman

I couldn't tell my mum that I met a guy who liked my voice because she would have quizzed me about why I wasn't at school. So I went to visit Kwame at his house and I still didn't tell my mum! I got round to telling her, three weeks later, when I recorded a demo. She was really shocked and couldn't believe it was me singing my own song.

Kwame and I started making demos and doing small showcase concerts. He wanted to call me Little Shola Ama. I told him I wouldn't stay little for long so we ditched that idea. A few people were buzzing about me and I was having meetings with record companies. On the very day I had a meeting with one of the important ones, which was just around the corner from a fight with me. It was so petty, it was over a chewing gum wrapper being thrown and hitting one of their legs. Before I knew it I had six

people jumping on me and hitting me with keys. So I went to that meeting with scars all down my forehead. My manager was anxiously lying about it: "She had an accident in drama class – she fell off a ladder."

Finally there was a deal on the table for me at WEA, we signed it on my 17th birthday. Nothing happened for so long, it seemed I was never going to get anywhere. It took until I was 18 before I had a hit with "You Might Need Somebody". It's just as well it took a while from when I was discovered to becoming successful because I had a lot of growing up to do.

Kwame is like a dad to me, and when I won best newcomer and best R&B at the MOBO [Music of Black Origin] awards and told him I loved him, tears welled up in his eyes and he cried. We are very close.

I don't really have a relationship with my real dad. He saw me as a tiny baby but he hasn't done much for me since which

is a bit of a disappointment. It would have left a big hole in my life if I hadn't understood when I was still quite young that I couldn't rely on him. You don't miss someone if you've never tasted it, it's only when you've been used to having ketchup on your chips that you worry when it runs out. It makes me proud of what a good job my mother has made of bringing me and my sister up on her own. I know if the same happened to me, I could do it myself.

Fame has made it hard to have a relationship; it's hell. There's a lot of things people can't handle about my success, and a man wants to be a man. If he knows there is nothing he could do for a woman that she can't do for herself he feels insecure. The only thing left is to treat her like dirt.

I have been in a few very bad relationships. I've just come out of a relationship and that was quite a sensitive one because I was opening up a bit. I cried a lot, I'm genuinely

quite gutted because everybody can have a lover but me! But I suppose at this stage I don't need a someone in my life who is sick of me not being there all the time. I can't go out with my boyfriend and just be myself. I have to be aware that there are people who might want to stop me for an autograph. Which would you rather have: a top 10 album and two top five singles or a boyfriend?

I never dreamed in a million years that I would have hits all over the world. Doing all of this has helped me find myself. I know what I want from life. I think my mother is genuinely happy that I bunked off school that day.

Interview by Andrew G Marshall

Shola Ama's new single is "Who's Loving My Baby?" and during the last week in November she is headlining the Radio One sponsored Rhythm Nation Tour.

Their traumas, my trial – a Cheshire lawyer feels the pain of 220 children

Peter Garsden worked in Cheshire, in a mixed law practice. But for the last three-and-a-half years his work has been unmixt. He has become obsessed with the cases of victims of child abuse and, as Roger Dobson reports, the effect on his life has been shattering.

It was just before midday on a Tuesday morning in May when Peter Garsden answered a telephone call that was to change his life. At the time he was a partner in a Cheshire firm of solicitors specialising in personal injury, as well as the usual small town mix of cases and clients.

But the 32-year-old man on the other end of the telephone had an altogether different kind of story. He was a sexual abuse victim and was the first of more than 200 men and women who

were to allege they had been abused when they were in children's homes in the North-west of England.

Three years on from that first phone call, Peter Garsden's life has been turned inside out. He has become obsessed with fighting for compensation for the 220 men and women whose vivid descriptions of the appalling abuse they suffered haunt him every day.

And the price of his obsession has been high. His marriage is in difficulties, relationships with his two young daughters have changed, he suffers with depression, has sleeping problems and, on one occasion, broke down while making a speech about abuse to MPs.

Peter Garsden's experiences highlight the emotional strain faced by lawyers dealing with the rising tide of child abuse cases. Unlike victims, perpetrators, policemen and social workers, lawyers do not have access to counselling to help them cope. Back in that spring of 1994, Mr Garsden appeared to have everything going for him. He was 37 and a partner in the firm of Abney Garsden McDonald which he had co-founded nine years earlier. He had a £200,000 house in Macclesfield, and was happily married with two young girls, Vanessa and Alexandra.

"Life was pretty good. The client who rang me that morning had been interviewed by the police as part of the North-west child abuse inquiry, and they had suggested he talk to a solicitor. That was my first contact with an abuse victim," he said.

That inquiry by Cheshire Police was to become Britain's biggest and longest investigation into child abuse in children's homes with more than 2,000 former residents traced.

"The man told me that he had been abused sexually for three years while at the children's home by a care worker. He found it very embarrassing,

and at that time, I did too."

It was some months later, when he became the lead solicitor in the group of lawyers representing around 220 victims of abuse, that the pressures began to mount when he read the statements of all the victims.

"As a professional you try to

boy, who is now a practising homosexual, was assaulted at a very young age by a teacher who had venereal disease.

"After he buggered the boy, the youngest, who was very young at the time, was taken to hospital. His anus was sewn up where it had been ripped and,



Peter Garsden: 'The case has taken so much out of me, I have neglected my own family'

Photograph: Newsteam

remain detached, but it is difficult with these cases. The psychological reports were the worst. It was distressing to read how a man could appear to be fine on the surface but underneath be a complete wreck with horrific symptoms of suicidal thoughts, self-mutilation, and all the other trappings of a legacy of years of abuse.

"Everything I read appalled me. At one of the homes, there was an allegation of physical torture where a care worker had carved their name into the back of a young boy. How evil can people be? Then there were the endless descriptions of the most horrific sexual abuse. One

unbelievably, he was sent back to the home where he had been abused. The sheer horror and brutality of that boy's life upset me enormously.

"It became a struggle to remain completely objective. I became involved with pressure groups made up of people with causes to fight for, and their passion rubbed off on me. I became a campaigner."

He describes how he first realised he had become emotionally involved when he went with pressure groups to lobby MPs at the House of Commons seeking heavier sentences for abusers.

"I was making a prepared

speech in one of the rooms and I had got to the part where I was describing the symptoms of victims when I just seized up.

"To me the most upsetting symptom is the man who has been abused, who knows that some victims become abusers, and who will not go near his own children for fear he may abuse them himself. As a father I find that very upsetting and I had got to that point in my speech when I was overcome with emotion and had to stop in mid-sentence."

"I then had to stand back and take stock. I used to be the sort of person who could shut the door on a Friday night and put the office to bed until Monday morning. I was not a person who let things get to him, but this case has taken over my life."

"My marriage has gone through trials and tribulations. My wife complains I work too much and although I don't drink very much, last year I went through a period when I was drinking more than normal. Janet and I have also started going to Relate. I feel the case has taken so much out of me I have neglected my family."

"I look at my own children in a different light. What I have read and heard over the last three years colours the relationship. When you play with them there is a flash in your mind and you remember what happened to children just like yours but who had the misfortune to be in a children's home."

Earlier this year his wife, Janet, who has been going to Relate for two months with her husband, sold her own business in an attempt to solve the problems in the relationship.

She says that her husband has changed considerably in the last three years: "He used to come in at six o'clock. We all ate together and he'd tell funny stories about what had happened in court or the office that day. When he got involved in this case he came home later and lat-

er, and when he did arrive he would either fall asleep or carry on working on the computer he had installed at home with a link to the office files.

"I tried to change to fit in with him. I sold my design business so that if he couldn't be there for the children, at least I was. Eventually I suggested we go to Relate, but he said there was nothing wrong."

"It was only when I told him that I was thinking of leaving that he agreed to go to Relate. We have had six sessions and I think we do communicate more. I was resentful that he was using up all the energy he had on other people and not on the family, but at the same time I am really very proud of what he is doing."

He accepts that he has changed and that his health has suffered too: "I get depressed and I am prone to lethargy. Apart from the case, it is a real effort to do anything else."

"There is no doubt it has

changed me. I don't do anything but abuse cases now, and if a new victim rings up, no matter how busy I am I will always spend as long as they want listening and talking because I now know how important it is to them and what an effort they have made to get that far."

Although many lawyers, all too aware of the emotional risks involved, will avoid child abuse cases, Peter Garsden is adamant he made the right decision, despite the toll on his personal life.

"I've never thought of giving it up, it is something I feel I have to do. People have a perception of lawyers as being only in it for the money, but we are not and we are affected by what we do just like anyone else."

"We have several years to go on this case yet, but we'll get there and the reward will be when we finally get the justice these young people deserve from a system that let them down so badly and so horrifically when they were children."

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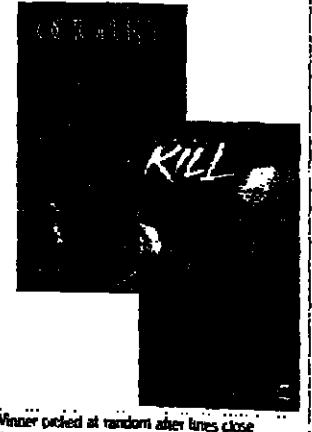
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Adding educational value is a long and arduous game



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Could do better. The only educational policy worth the name is one that strives for all-round improvement, in attendance records, exam results, skills acquisition, and pupils' attitudes. Improvement is happening - praise where it is due to the heads, teachers, parents and pupils making the effort. But on the evidence of today's spread of data it is far too patchy.

These latest "league tables" are, or ought to be, a map for education's general staff. The military metaphor is apt; if not national survival then national prosperity, let alone social equanimity, depend on continuing improvement, especially in the lower divisions. It's going to be a long march, too. If consistent improvement in exam results over the past three years is a fair test, then what we learn today is how few schools are on the upward curve. An improvement ratio of 5 per cent is not good enough - even if these tables are distorted by including those schools (mainly in the private sector) which are pretty much incapable of betterment.

Do the improving schools offer lessons for the rest? Among them the City Technology Colleges and the grant-maintained schools figure prominently. It would be churlish to deny that these Conservative innovations have been good for their parents and pupils, but equally it would be naive not to ask some searching questions about the policy of preference which has underpinned them. Material resources are part of their story. A new school is a solid basis for improvement. That pretty much sums up most CTCs, as they started life in the early 1990s. Grant-maintained schools in their early years enjoyed, generally speaking, favourable allocations.

The difficulty is stripping out of this evidence the effect of schools' selection policies, however covert. Schools that select ought to score high on attainment tests. The London Oratory, to name a famous name, clearly chooses its pupils on the basis of aspiration and (parental) attitude if not formally on test scores. If it and grant-maintained schools like it had become

more selective in the past, that might explain higher attainment at 16- and 18-plus.

The key question behind all such educational data is whether a school is "adding value". Selectivity itself ought to be irrelevant to general measures of improvement, unless other schools are forced to enroll higher concentrations of children from the middle and lower ability bands. Educational progress rests on more schools doing better with unpromising material - using that phrase not in some snuffy sense, but as an accurate summation of the multiple barriers to learning among certain classes of pupils.

Only by raising performance among the ranks of children of mediocre ability will we raise the overall level of our educational standing. Bluntly, in the high skill working environment of the future, that is the only way those individuals are going to have any real prospect of prosperity and security. And it is prosperity and security that young people themselves mostly aspire to, according to the survey we are

publishing this week, sponsored by the Industrial Society.

The most exciting findings of these tables come from Sheffield, Salford and Tower Hamlets in London from schools with unpromising catchments which are pushing up their results year by year. It is there that lessons are to be learnt. No school should ever be condemned to "sink" status, and the first task is identification. This map leaves Labour in no doubt about where policies to combat under-performance need to be focused. (A word or two of praise from Labour ministers for their Conservative predecessors for making this data possible would not go amiss, either.)

Take the tables on truancy. They make depressing reading. Truancy and social exclusion are close relations. Here is evidence that, for example, the City of Kingston-upon-Hull and Nottingham are failing to educate far too high a proportion of their young people. Is it a coincidence that the local authorities in those areas have re-

cently taken over administration of schools from county councils? The centre does not only have to ask what the relevant councils are doing about non-attendance, but to collaborate in the task of getting children back and cajole those who do not respond quickly enough.

Ministers know that, in the end, they cannot run schools from the centre. Making public examples of the heads of failing schools, while salutary, is only a last resort. The real business is done by building up an effective teaching team, bringing parents in, constructing an ethos of attainment, providing the kind of support that enables long-term improvement.

The people who can really change the system are already in it: teachers, and their head teachers. We must hope that they have collectively accepted the value of the kind of indicators published today, recognising, of course, that they are only one of a set of indicators among many. These lessons are not to be dismissed - they must be acted on, above all at school level.

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Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Power to the GPs

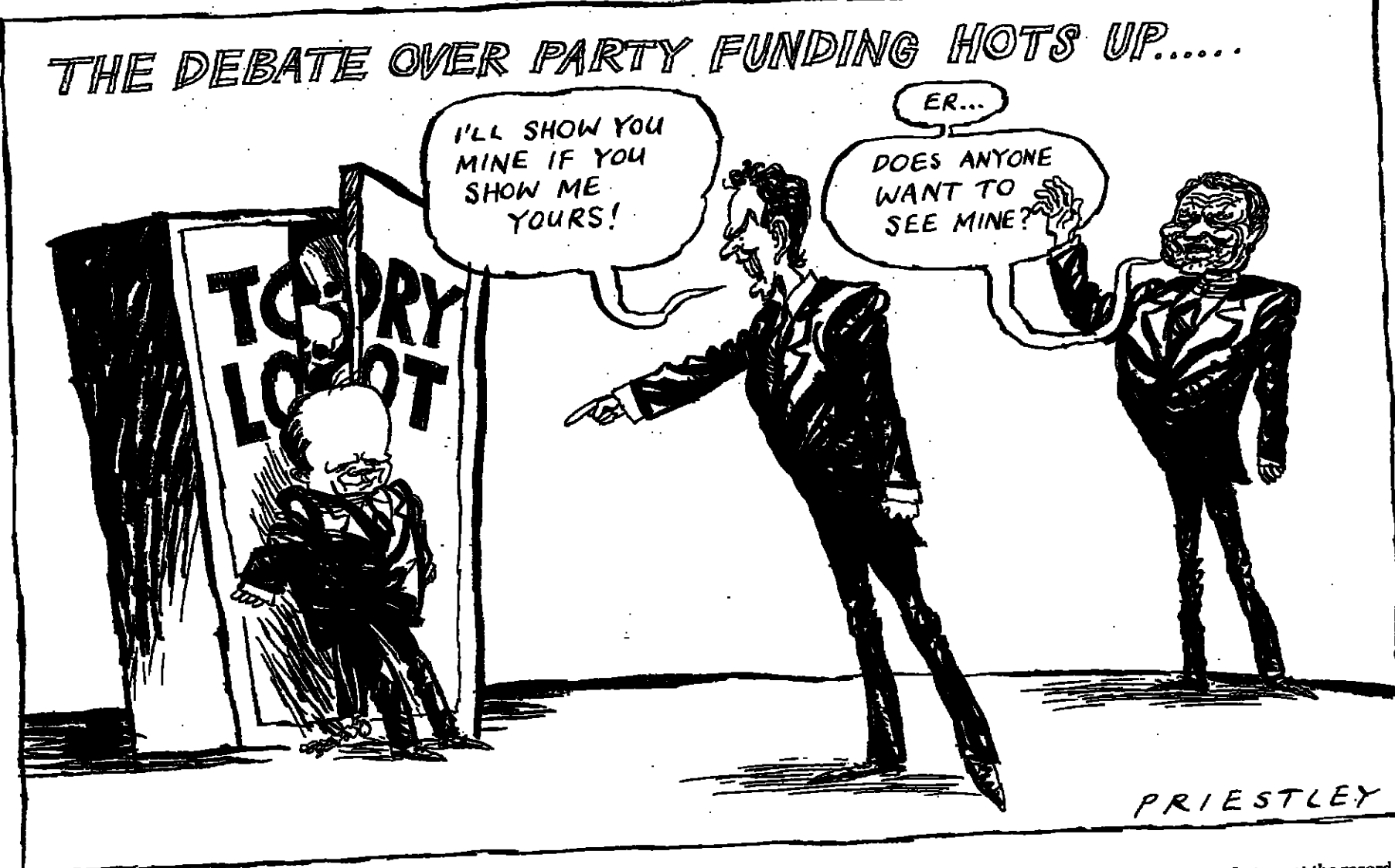
Sir: The preview of the White Paper on the NHS (report, 12 November) suggests it will contain interesting and commendable plans. Replacement of GP fundholding with larger groupings of GPs is welcome, as is the idea of a budget combining hospital, primary and community care.

This will indeed break down a "Berlin Wall" but it is a pity that the opportunity is not being taken to remove the other artificial barrier between purchaser and provider. This has no remaining purpose if the market is to go, and if it is retained so will be much of the market and its attendant bureaucracy.

The glaring omission is any reference to democratic accountability. There seems little point in reforming appointments to trust boards and health authorities on Nolan principles if 90 per cent of the budget (and therefore the power) is in the hands of GP collectives. To whom will the latter be responsible? Better to combine the GP collectives with the public health expertise of existing health authorities, which should have boards properly accountable to the people of the area.

Removal of competition between trusts probably removes the need for trust boards, with further savings. The tighter management from "the centre" which is envisaged as replacing that competition raises the question of where that managerial function will lie. It strengthens the argument for a powerful and accountable health authority.

PETER FISHER
Chairman
National Health Service
Consultants' Association
Great Bourn, Oxfordshire



Essentially the present "assumption" is that there are two levels of need: that patients older than 75 require twice as much care as those below that age.

The most elementary studies show that age alone is a crude measure of medical need, and even here ratios of demand rise from the age of 50 years to double by 65, treble by 75 and increase by four to six times above 75.

Relative to your needs, the older you become the less NHS funds your GP is given.

Dr R C GILBERTSON
Christchurch, Dorset

Blair's apology

Sir: How refreshing to listen to Tony Blair, and read his apology over the Formula One scandal (report, 17 November). Politicians are human beings - although many of them try hard to conceal the fact. They are fallen, flawed and fall-

ible like the rest of us. Why must they struggle to project an aura of perfection?

Tony Blair has done more to earn the respect of the British public with a two-minute honest apology than all his predecessors with their bluster and evasion of responsibility.

HUGH J THOMSON
Birmingham

Sir: I am a lifelong Labour supporter and I am dismayed at the appalling spectacle of our high-minded leader squirming on the skewer of sleaze allegations.

At one level, the "cash for favours" row is nowhere near as bad as the financial scandals that rocked John Major's government - Labour is after all returning the Formula One money. At another level - what one might almost call the spiritual level - it is far, far worse. Labour came to power on an anti-sleaze ticket. Tony Blair invited us to trust him

and we responded to his appeal. It is too early to say we feel betrayed, but certainly our faith has been badly shaken. It is like being in a marriage where all the evidence points towards our spouse's infidelity yet we still can't quite believe it.

In any case, if the Government isn't corrupt it has acted with scarcely believable incompetence in allowing itself to be presented as corrupt. The Prime Minister must resolve never to allow anything like this to happen again.

STUART RUSSELL
Poulton, Gloucestershire

Unliberated gays

Sir: Kathy Marks cannot be allowed to claim (Features, 11 November) that "after three decades of campaigning, many of the [lesbian and gay] legal battles have been won and remaining inequalities look set to

be tackled by the Labour government".

Those three decades have brought nothing but failure on the legal front. In England in 1967 there was a higher age of consent for gay men. If a man and a woman had sex in public, the charge was "indecent", if two men, "gross indecency". If three people (male and female) had sex together, it was a party. If three gay men had sex together it was a criminal offence.

It was not "unfair dismissal" to sack someone for being gay. Homosexual partners had no visiting rights in hospitals and no rights to inherit on an intestate death; nor could they contract a civil partnership contract the way heterosexuals could.

What has changed? The armed forces law has been relaxed. A gay soldier is now "merely" sacked without compensation; he is no longer imprisoned as well. But the Tories made it illegal for local councils to fund gay activities and censorship of gay publications is stricter now than 20 years ago.

What will Labour do about any of this? On the important civil liberties issue of the age of consent, it plans to allow a free vote. It refuses to touch the criminal prohibition, for example, on three people having sex.

We have never been had so good.

MICHAEL MASON
London SW7

BZW deal

Because of a production error, the following letter was omitted from early editions yesterday.

Sir: You published an article on 14 November purporting to describe a video conference of our managing directors that took place the previous day.

Let us set the record straight.

We are pleased to have agreed to acquire the European equity and investment banking business of BZW, which we regard as a high-quality and complementary addition. We are also conscious of the hard work and substantial investment needed to integrate the two firms successfully. Your partisan references to glorying, boasting and the like are mischievous and dangerous.

You claim we forecast "mass [back-office] sackings". This is wholly untrue. We expect to employ several hundred BZW back-office staff whose skills we greatly value. Indeed, our need for the relevant back-office staff was a specific condition set by us during the negotiations.

STEPHEN HESTER
Chief Financial Officer
Credit Suisse First Boston
London E14

Policing protesters

Sir: On Saturday I attended the anti-National Front demonstration in Dover. When I walked into the park with two friends we were confronted by police. They told us we had to have a comprehensive body-search and give our names, addresses and personal details for their files, although we had broken no law. I was told I would be arrested if I left without complying.

Eventually a sergeant told me I needn't give my details, but I still had to be searched. Not wanting to be unreasonable, and having nothing to hide, I agreed. The officer who searched me scrutinised every scrap of paper in my wallet, passing items to his colleague, who copied down personal details. When I asked what sort of offensive weapon he expected to find there he replied, with a straight face, "razor blades". All the while our faces were being videoed by a police camera team.

The police said all this was "for your own protection". When I want police protection I'll ask for it.

We were not a gang of tattooed, knife-toting skinheads. We are short, bespectacled and rather feeble-looking specimens - a PhD student, a school teacher and a care worker.

DAVID TURNER
Borden, Kent

Black angels

Sir: Trevor Phillips ("Black Angels?", 15 November) mentioned Aretha Franklin and her right to a place in heaven. He ought also to have mentioned Roberta Flack. Way back in 1969 her debut album *First Take* included the song "Angelitos Negros", and she is quoted in the sleeve notes: "Painters, why do you always paint white virgins? Paint beautiful black angels."

SANDRA BROWNE HART
Barnham, Suffolk

Everywhere

Sir: It is the word "absolutely" that is ubiquitous (letter, 14 November). Just listen to any interview.

BERNICE PEDGLEY
Wallingford, Oxfordshire

More of the proverbial from Albania: plenty of wit, not a lot of wisdom



MILES KINGSTON

It's time for more Albanian proverbs today, from the *Great Book of Albanian Proverbs* which I am slowly translating in my declining years. Albanian proverbs, if you have never come across them before, are exactly the opposite of ours. Ours are short, pithy and fairly useless until you start thinking about them; Albanian proverbs sound fairly deep and meaningful unless you start thinking about them.

Here goes, then, with some meretricious wit and wisdom!

Never ask a Formula One Grand Prix racing driver to teach you the technique of reversing a car.

If birds were able to talk, would they bother to sing?

When does a letter arrive? When the postman delivers it? When it is opened and read? Or when it is answered?

A lift spends 50 per cent of its time going up and 50 per cent of its time going down, but from the name it is given in all countries - ascenseur, elevator, lift, etc - you would deduce that it could only go up, not down.

Nobody knows all the words of his own national anthem.

You can get sea-sick in a set of revolving doors, but you can't cross to France in them.

All parrots think they are teaching us to say "Pretty Polly" or "Who's a pretty girl then?" When they think we have mastered the phrase, they give up. But we don't see it that way. We think that parrots lose the knack of talking, whereas all that has happened is that they have given up teaching us.

Who will send the Queen a telegram when she is 100?

Nobody ever really believes he is going to die. If they did, they would be working on their dying words now.

There is only one thing worse than a hymn, and that is a Christmas carol.

Aeroplane disaster movies are never shown as in-flight entertainment on aeroplanes. It is the only good thing to be said about air travel.

It would be easier to take the single currency seriously if the word "euro" wasn't pronounced quite differently in every country.

If we are ever invaded by aliens who feed on electricity, we will be sorry that we left our pylons unguarded.

People are sometimes described as natural blondes and sometimes as natural brunettes, but nobody is ever described as naturally bald.

Woe betide the substitute who scores a goal in his first game, for much will be expected of him.

Angling must be one of the most feminine activities in the world. It is quiet, organised and moderately healthy, and requires endless patience. Why are all anglers men, then? Because all sensible women also think it is entirely pointless.

If I had been condemned to death in the Middle Ages, and had been given the choice of the method of execution, I hope I would have had the presence of mind to ask to be electrocuted.

There are two kinds of people who make jokes about their cheques possibly bouncing - those who are quite sure their cheques won't bounce and those who are quite sure they will.

The man who sneers at take-away food will happily go out on a picnic, and the man who passionately defends live entertainment is furious whenever a cinema is turned into a bingo hall.

An after-dinner speaker: One who would willingly do the speaking for half the money if he could be allowed to miss the dinner.

17/COMMENT

Freedom of information gets caught in the spin



**DONALD
MACINTYRE
NOT-SO-OPEN
GOVERNMENT**

Most of what Tony Blair apologised for on Sunday had to do with information. In hindsight, he didn't think that it was a good idea to dribble out the facts about Bernie Ecclestone's £1m donation to the Labour Party, under pressure, and at the rate of one new fact a day. (He was right.) And hey, yes, of course he was prepared to publish the note taken of his meeting with the Formula One boss. No problem - except that here the Prime Minister issued an interesting caveat. Not once but twice. This wasn't, he emphasised, to be regarded as a precedent. Otherwise, as he pointed out, "people will be asking me to publish everything". Perfectly sensible, of course; civil servants, and quite a lot of other people, would be understandably horrified if they thought that every time the Prime Minister got some bad headlines he was planning to publish details of his recent private meetings to still doubts of any jiggery-pokery. But could it also just be that a corner of his subconscious mind was focused on quite an intense debate going on in the higher reaches of government over just how much it should be prepared to disclose about its internal deliberations?

For negotiations on next month's Freedom of Information White Paper are coming to a head. This is a big step. At the most unglamorous level, next year's Bill will underpin existing rights, and afford some new ones, to information about the sort of humdrum administrative decisions that don't make headlines but matter intensely to ordinary people. Why hasn't Medicine X been banned? Why hasn't Community Centre Y been granted a drinks licence? Why has new development Z been given the go ahead on my doorstep? What does the environmental inspection report really say about the chemical factory at the end of my road? It should widen the right of access to those of your personal files held by - for example - the DSS or the Inland Revenue or the Police, which are not on computer and therefore not covered by the Data Protection Act. It will also give new force to the obligations imposed on departments by the non-statutory Code of Access to Government Information, established by John Major's government. It will probably create a new Information Commissioner who will be able to weigh any possible damage from a particular application for disclosure against the public interest. And it will extend the obligations to local authorities and dozens of powerful quangos and nationalised industries. So, surely, a liberal culture-changing measure in all respects?

Well, all but one, actually. For ministers have now started to balk at the prospect of even a heavily qualified right to see information in the category of exemption described in the Major code as "internal discussion and advice". Which means pretty well every piece of paper, however impersonal, that passes around Whitehall in the run-up to a decision. The majority on the committee appear to have accepted the heavy old argument that the possible release un-

der the Freedom of Information Act of any advice drawn up by officials will, in the words of the Major code, "inhibit the frankness and candour of internal discussion". But even the Tory Cabinet Office minister Roger Freeman made it clear that if the harm from disclosure was outweighed by the public interest, then such material could, at least in theory, be published. The fear among liberals now is that when the code, or rather a version of it, becomes statutory, the whole category of such information will be subject to blanket exclusion. So in one respect the new bill would actually be less progressive than the much derided Major code.

Now the "candour" argument should be taken with a large pinch of salt. Nobody seriously believes - say - that anyone is going to be required to disclose a minute from Jonathan Powell, Chief of Staff, to the Prime Minister saying: "I know it's a nuisance but we've got to see Bernie Ecclestone because we're into him for a million and it's the least he expects"; or alternatively one in which he says: "For God's sake don't see Ecclestone. This will be trouble which will only blow up in your face." But Action on Smoking and Health, or anyone else for that matter, might reasonably at some point in the future ask to see the analysis of the policy options made in October/November 1997 on whether or not to support the exemption, including the DIT's analysis of how many and what sort of jobs would have been lost if Formula One went out of the country. That sort of subsequent disclosure doesn't compromise civil servants; but it may well make for better decisions. And while we're about it, who would have been damaged by publication of the Treasury's long and thoughtful look at itself last year? It was the fact of the leak, and not the content, which made it a sensation.

In Australia senior civil servants were deeply worried about precisely the "candour" issue. Since the Freedom of Information Act there, they have admitted it hasn't been a problem. All sorts of other arguments will be used in favour of the restrictive, conservative approach. One is the cost of dealing with FOI applications - though this could be allayed by charging a higher differential rate for business applicants and, perhaps, diverting some of the Government's press and publicity officers to Freedom of Information duties. Nor, by the way, are we talking about immediate disclosure. It wouldn't even affect the new higher art form of democracy, news management. In most countries where there is an act, the commissioner or his equivalent routinely rules against disclosure on "harm" grounds if it would affect an issue then in the headlines. Any Information Commissioner is bound to weed out the material that compromises civil servants or undermines collective Cabinet responsibility.

The most interesting question may be which way Lord Irvine, who is chairing the committee, leans. At present, according to some accounts, Jack Straw is influential at the hawkish end of the argument on the committee, a rather lonely David Clark at the other. Mr Clark, regularly tipped as a Cabinet casualty, and with an unnecessary penchant for first-class air travel, may not be the most charismatic of politicians. But that doesn't necessarily make him wrong. Unless the Bill holds out the possibility for publication, in due time, of some internal advice, it will miss a big opportunity for an incremental but worthwhile government reform; it will also mean that ministers will come under continuing and tiresome pressure to do more. For what a more open regime - allowing publication of limited policy discussion within the lifetime of an administration, rather than when 30 years have elapsed - may well help to achieve is better, more thoughtful, government. And, funnily enough, good governments tend to last longer.

In markets, the worst rarely happens. But don't count on it



**ANDREAS
WHITTAM
SMITH
INFERNAL
MACHINES**

Finally, the bad news from the world's financial markets has got to me. I didn't worry in October, when the newspapers were full of articles demonstrating the uncanny similarity between current conditions and those of October 1987, the last occasion when the world's stockmarkets fell out of bed. Nor was I alarmed when a copycat shake-out duly appeared, right on cue. Since then, after all, Wall Street and London and the main European bourses have regained some of the ground they gave up.

Until now, I have shrugged off Thailand's banking crisis. In the case of Indonesia, I have been unmoved by the massive support package which the International Monetary Fund has had to make available. The fact that poor President Suharto has had to close down banks owned by his relatives I found perversely encouraging. I accepted the comment from an economist in Singapore who was quoted as saying that "the Indonesian Government seems very much committed to the reform package and things should move along".

But then I perceived a dangerous phenomenon which occasionally appears in the financial markets. I call it an "infernal machine", in the dictionary definition of the phrase - an apparatus, usually disguised, for producing an explosion to destroy life or property. This is a good description of what is happening to Japanese banks. They are being destroyed.

What is the infernal machine which is responsible? A substantial part of the reserves of Japanese banks comprises shares in Japanese companies. As the Japanese stockmarket has deteriorated, dropping by a quarter since June, so the reserves that Japanese banks hold have shrunk. By law, however, Japanese banks are required to maintain their resources at a level sufficient to repay depositors should there be unusual demands for cash.

Sensing this squeeze, investors in Japanese shares have grown frightened and sold more shares. The stockmarket falls again. The squeeze intensifies. The banks call in their loans. Their customers begin to

feel the pain. And the infernal machine, disguised as it is, starts to explode the Japanese banking system and with it property, in the sense that the value of all assets declines sharply.

Just as I was reflecting on this mechanism, there came the news of the collapse of Japan's tenth largest bank, Hokkaido Tokai. Yesterday the bank announced that it was going out of business. Here was the test. Only governments have the power to break the vicious circle. What would the Japanese government do? It decided to protect depositors by advancing funds for that purpose alone. In relief the Japanese stockmarket registered big gains.

But this is the single response that governments can make to such a crisis. Even if they have to print banknotes, they can make sure that depositors are repaid. They cannot do much about the other ill consequences. They cannot overnight restore a healthy banking system which provides working capital for successful companies and finance for international trade. They cannot prevent the substantial slowing down in economic activity that a banking crisis necessarily entails.

Moreover, in the rest of Asia where banks have developed weaknesses and started to rock on their foundations - in an area stretching from South Korea via Hong Kong (which has witnessed sporadic panic withdrawals of deposits) through Thailand and Malaysia, and down to Indonesia - governments are not behaving as decisively as the Japanese. In Indonesia, where 16 private banks have recently failed, individual depositors and businesses can only retrieve

\$5,700 from their accounts. Repayment of additional amounts must wait until the bank's assets are sold off - which may take years and yield little. It is because of developments like this that an entire economic region, until recently so vibrant, one of the motors of the world economy, is losing speed.

Panic, we know, is contagious. Even so, I have been surprised to find how badly South America has been affected by what is happening in Asia. The trading links between the two regions are not particularly close. In fact the virus has been carried across the Pacific by international investors. Weakness in Asia's failed economies has been taken as a signal to get out of South America's more pedestrian business sectors. The effects have been dramatic and disturbing.

Last week the Brazilian stockmarket dropped 10 per cent in a single day, bringing the cumulative decline to 40 per cent in three weeks. The government has responded with the familiar medicine, which makes the patient feel much worse in the initial stages. It has doubled interest rates, cut government spending and increased taxes. Brazil, one of the biggest economies in the world, plays a pivotal role in South America. For example it takes half of Argentina's exports.

But something even more worrying happened at the same time. The countries that make up the South American trade group (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay) raised their external tariff from 12 per cent to 15 per cent in response to the turmoil in world markets. Were they affected by the clear sign, given by the American congress ten days ago, that it

had lost its appetite for promoting free trade, when it refused to give President Clinton the negotiating authority he requires, the so-called fast track legislation? Do not forget that high trade barriers were a major factor in the Depression of the 1930s.

However, I am glad to say that no signs of panic can be found in North America and Europe. Admirable sang froid is being displayed by everybody, from the chairman of the US Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, down to the humble investor. It is, of course, the invariable response of governments to crises to say that there is no crisis. In testimony to Congress, Mr Greenspan went even further, saying that the difficulties that had created such volatility in stockmarkets around the world could even benefit the United States by helping in a small way to suppress inflation. And then the chairman summarised his thinking in the form of a striking double negative: "To date, the direct impact of these developments on the American economy has been modest, but it can be expected not to be negligible."

Not negligible, I can accept that judgement so long as the infernal machine demolishing the Japanese banking system can be stopped. For it has an even more dreadful power to wreak damage. It can work internationally. Suppose the Japanese stockmarket reverses this week's gains and begins to sink again. As a result the shortage of bank credit for companies outside the first league, and the absence of liquidity for institutions with large stockmarket holdings, would grow more acute. At this point they might begin to sell part of their massive holdings on Wall Street, where they have huge profits, magnified by currency movements, ripe for the taking. This is how it works. Japanese investors sell a bit of their American portfolios. Wall Street prices fall. The Japanese investors think that they had better hurry up. They sell some more stocks. And so on. The infernal machine is once again destroying value.

Alarmist? Undoubtedly. Will it happen? Probably not; the worst rarely happens. All the same, Japanese investors were net sellers of foreign stocks and bonds in September. That is one more reason why I have started to worry.



Bowing out: Hideo Takashoku Bank president Sadamasa Kawatani (third from right) with other board members, apologising yesterday following the collapse of their Japanese bank. Photograph: Reuters

What a gentile can learn from a Jewish joke



**SHEENA
MCDONALD
MINORITY
STRATAGEMS**

Tired of domestic Sturm und Drang? Why not see how your neighbours manage things. In Alabama this month, the courts outlawed Christian prayers in schools. The protests have been noisy and embittered. The Antichrist is abroad insists the fundamentalist Christian Coalition. The ruling is a rallying point for extremists, who frame their propaganda as defying an unreasonable assault on the

freedom to worship, but whose spiritual forefathers deployed the rack and flame. TV screens are filled with images of children praying in public, while their parents lament their inability to do so in school.

Alan Dershowitz, the renowned Harvard law professor, scents trouble. Favour the majority in as explosive an arena as religion, and you sow the seeds for downgrading, distancing, expelling, exiling the minority - and reaping the dragon-toothed lawlessness of terrorism. Coerced problems encourage dangerous solutions. And his family, along with millions of others around the world, know directly how cataclysmic a "solution" can be.

"We Jews made up 4 per cent of the population [in the US] 10 years ago. By the end of the decade we'll be 2 per cent. Early in the new millennium, we'll make up just 1 per cent. And we think we can afford to be divided amongst ourselves?"

Dershowitz, epitomised to the point of caricature as the fast talker, high earner, self-

promoting liberal celebrity New York lawyer, is addressing a gathering of New Yorkers, assembled in a vast airy Upper West Side synagogue to hear him debate what it means to be Jewish, with another bright, shining star of East Coast intellectual Jewry, David Mamet.

Dershowitz, now helping out the defence team on the Woodward appeal, in addition to his regular workload, plus 13 *pro bono* cases ("I never turn down a capital case - never!") is doing nothing on this November afternoon to dilute his coast-to-coast notoriety for overstepping the mark. "Two Jews sitting in a cafe in Vienna in 1938 - one's reading his community paper, he sees his friend reading the vilest anti-Semitic rag in the city. 'Why are you reading that trash?' 'It makes me feel better about myself. Your paper - all you read is what we lost, how we failed, how we're repressed. This paper - it says the Jews run everything! The banks, big business, international trade...'"

I blench, but I'm beguiled. My neighbours laugh. It's what they came for. As the tussle be-

tween liberal and orthodox wings for the heart of Jewry takes hold on both sides of the Atlantic, the community's public figures find their utterances pared over for oracular significance. Jokes define and position as much as affirmations of faith.

The two men are now taking questions, and the majority are pitched at Dershowitz, who has stolen the show with his pace and wit. Mamet, so true on the page, stage and screen in his authentic reproduction of the numberless inarticulate dialects of North America, turns out to be endearingly hesitant in his very own. Dershowitz, in contrast, has not only a considered answer for each point, he gift-wraps it with jokes, one-liners and parables.

Dershowitz broadcasts his own kind of assimilation. I, a lone Gentile in this congregation, a minority within a minority, think he means, honour your own beliefs and be secure enough in them to respect others' differences, the better to promote their respect for yours. And I'm comforted with that, I think. Raised within the faith of the majority,

I have always smiled tolerantly on the "ress", I feel comfortable enough here today, distanced from the dispute that occupies this assembly.

So why is this liberal dealing in ethnographic statistics? What kind of racial protectionism has invaded the philosophy of this man who asserts that "the moment you convert to Judaism, you were at Sinai - you were always a Jew"? I thought for a moment he might be advocating quotas and ideal proportions in a city whose schools cater for the needs of the young speakers of over a hundred native tongues. But in fact he is warning against the stockade mentality that envelops much of America. He has confidence that no matter how small his minority, it can still make positive contributions to the larger society.

He might, I realise, have quoted another notorious Jew from times past, but not even his *chutzpah* runs to ironically invoking the challenge issued in another great temple in a disputed land: "Render unto Caesar..." The message is an-

cient, but new-minted daily in the US. Do not confuse faith and state. That way lies institutionalised intolerance and the seeds of self-destruction. And demonstrating and practising division within your own faith weakens it, as surely as the extremists hope to strengthen it.

But back home, this is a message that seems inadequate to the challenges of the Old World. Around the Mediterranean, administrations have become tainted with the violence of extremism they failed to quench. Indulging certain minorities has not created broad, tolerant churches.

And in the eerily clean streets of cosmopolitan Upper Manhattan, mysteriously cleansed of panhandlers and bums by mayor Giuliani's Republican guard, there is a misleading sense of well-being that makes rueful mockery of Dershowitz's witty warnings.

I want to ask him whether he would unquestionably defend an avowed anti-Semite on a charge of race-motivated murder. But, a minority within a minority, I am dumb.

IF HE'S EVER NEEDED A FRIEND...

...IT'S NOW

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Address
Postcode
THE AIMS OF THE RSPCA ARE TO PREVENT CRUELTY AND PROMOTE KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.
WE RECEIVE NO GOVERNMENT FUNDING.
RSPCA
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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Puck

Bae threatens to take Airbus work abroad in aid row

British Aerospace is threatening to relocate some of its Airbus work abroad, amid indications that it will be refused £120m in launch aid to develop a new stretched version of the A340 jet. As Michael Harrison reports, the move would put thousands of jobs at risk and raise question marks over Britain's role in the four-nation consortium.

The Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry are poised to reject Bae's application for launch investment for the new A340-500 and 600 aircraft.

The development has come as a shock, since only last Friday the DTI announced a £200m aid package for Rolls-Royce to develop a version of its Trent engine to power the 375-seater Airbus jet.

The recommendation not to grant government support to Bae is understood to have been made by the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, who has been vetting the application as part of his overall responsibility for public-private partnerships. Both the President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, who is in New Delhi at the moment as part of trade mission to India and Australia, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, are understood to have discussed the situation.

Spokesmen for both the DTI and the Treasury denied that a decision had been made, adding that the application was still under active consideration. However, a Bae spokesman said: "If the rumours are true that launch aid has been refused then there will be very serious consequences."

It is understood that Bae would review its investment strategy with the intention of carrying out the Airbus work in a country where government support would be forthcoming.

"It would be reasonable to speculate that Bae would look very seriously at whether it would want to continue investing in the UK as far as the Airbus programme is concerned," said one senior industry source.

Bae employs about 6,000 people directly on the Airbus programme, making wings for the aircraft at Chester, the Filton plant near Bristol, Chadderton near Manchester and Prestwick in Ayr. However, the total number of UK jobs dependent on the Airbus programme is reckoned to be nearer 40,000 including sub-contractors and suppliers.

It is thought that one option for Bae would be to subcontract its work share on the new Airbus to Italy or Spain, which is one of the four partners in the consortium.

A refusal by the UK government to provide support for the latest jet could also complicate attempts to turn the Airbus consortium into a single commercial entity by 1999 ahead of a flotation of the business. "This is an important moment for Britain to be showing an interest in Airbus and a commitment to the business," one source said.

Bae has a 20 per cent stake in Airbus while Daimler-Benz and Aerospatiale of France each have a 37.9 per cent stake and Casa of Spain the remaining 4.2 per cent.

Bae has now repaid all the launch aid received on the Airbus A320 programme and expects to repay a further £500m of launch aid over the next three years.

Airbus had planned to confirm the industrial launch of the A340-500 and 600 at the Dubai airshow but was forced to postpone an announcement because of uncertainties about UK support for the programme. Four airlines have so far announced orders for the new aircraft - Virgin Atlantic, Air Canada, Egyptair and Eva Air of Taiwan. Airbus is understood to have 80 orders from seven launch customers.

The new A340 will cost about \$2bn (£1.2bn) to develop in total and will be able to seat 375 passengers - allowing it to compete directly with some versions of the Boeing 747 Jumbo jet.

A Treasury spokesman said last night: "A decision has not yet been announced. The Government is considering the application against the framework of public-private partnerships."

The DTI said: "The matter is still under consideration and a decision will be made in due course."

Outlook, page 21



Unalloyed dismay: Sir Brian Moffat, the chairman, announced a 45 per cent slump in pre-tax profits for the first six months of the year, from £262m to £143m

British Steel rails against Government on sterling

The chairman of British Steel yesterday attacked the Government over its stance on the single currency as the company reported a near halving in profits and warned of more jobs cuts to come. Michael Harrison reports on the toll that exchange rates are continuing to take on the manufacturing sector.

Sir Brian Moffat criticised the Government's decision to rule out entering the single currency in this parliament and said the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and other ministers should be doing more to talk the pound down.

"I wouldn't close the door this side of

the next government. If you can keep the door open you are in a better bargaining position," he said.

Sir Brian was speaking as British Steel announced a 45 per cent slump in pre-tax profits for the first six months of the year from £262m to £143m and refused to deny reports that 10,000 jobs would disappear from its UK workforce over the next few years.

The company believes that Britain's refusal to contemplate entering economic and monetary union before 2002 is contributing to the artificially high level of sterling which is wreaking such havoc on its profits.

The 20 per cent rise in the value of sterling against the German mark in the last year has cost British Steel an estimated £600m in profits and Sir Brian said the Government should be doing more to help

by talking down the currency. He said that he had written to the Chancellor a fortnight ago setting out his view and had received a reply from Mr Brown saying, in effect: "I hear your words."

The exchange rate squeeze has meant a redoubling in British Steel's efforts to reduce its cost base. It is aiming to cut its £2.5bn supply bill by up to £500m while slashing employee numbers further. The UK workforce has fallen by 3,000 in the last 12 months to 40,800 and by the end of this year will have declined by a further 2,100, including 600 jobs that will disappear with the outsourcing of its IT activities to CAP Gemini.

Sir Brian refused to comment on the possibility of British Steel taking a stake in the German steelmaker Preussag Stahl. But he confirmed that plans to invest in a \$600m (£353m) steel mill in Indonesia had

been put on the backburner because of the economic turmoil in Pacific Rim countries.

The fall in profits was due to an 11 per cent slump in revenues per tonne which more than cancelled out a 4 per cent increase in deliveries to 7.5 million tonnes and a 20-25 per cent improvement in prices across the board. However, the decline in earnings was not as bad as analysts had predicted and British Steel shares put on 3.75p to close at 148.75p.

Sir Brian said the impact of the strong pound was likely to be more pronounced in the second half but, set against this, the company would have the full benefit of higher prices. Analysts' forecasts for second-half profits vary from £100m to £200m which would give full-year profits of about £250m-£350m compared with £451m last year.

Investment column, page 20
Outlook, page 21

Tunnel link group rules out stopping short of London

The consortium chosen to build the high-speed Channel Tunnel rail link yesterday emphatically ruled out stopping the line short of central London and said its plans to raise up to £5.4bn in finance and let key tunnelling contracts remained on course. Michael Harrison reports.

London & Continental Railways (LCR), which was awarded the franchise to operate rail services to the tunnel in May last year, said the option of phasing the project or ending the route at Stratford in Essex or Ebbsfleet in Kent had been "discarded as fundamentally flawed".

Adam Mills, chief executive of LCR, said both it and the Government were so committed to building the 68-mile link right through to St Pancras station in central London that the issue of alternatives had not even been discussed with John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Transport, Environment and the Regions.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the link will be built as planned because first that is what we are legally contracted by the Government to do and second because all the evaluation we have done shows that the economics of the project would not work if it ended anywhere else," Mr Mills said.

He added that preferred contractors for £500m worth of tunnelling work in London would be announced before Christmas with the contracts let in the spring.

LCR also intends to present detailed proposals to the City covering the financing and building of the link early in the new year ahead of a £5.4bn fund-raising exercise in the middle of next year.

Although LCR is still proceeding on the basis of floating on the stock market as an independent business, Mr Mills did not rule out participation in the project by a third party.

The consortium is talking to seven other parties including Railtrack about how they could help with the financing and construction of the link.

LCR said it remained confident that the capital cost of the project would not exceed £3bn in 1995 prices. However, together with working capital for its existing train operation, Eurostar, and financing costs, the peak funding requirement could reach £5.4bn.



John Prescott: London & Continental said it had not even discussed alternatives with the Deputy Prime Minister

LCR confirmed that the fire inside the Channel Tunnel a year ago had affected passenger growth rates for its Eurostar service and said it would set out details of its new forecasts to the City in its presentation early next year. Eurostar will handle about 6 million passengers this year compared with a forecast by the tunnel operator Eurotunnel of 6.7 million. Eurotunnel put Eurostar passenger numbers at 9.6 million next year and 10.6 million in 1999.

Mr Mills said the link was still on schedule to open, as planned, in 2003 and that tenders had been invited for two-thirds of the construction cost.

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Staples joins Amey as CEO

Brian Staples, who was ousted as chief executive of United Utilities four months ago, has been appointed to the same post at Amey, the road builder and facilities management company.

Mr Staples is suing United Utilities, based in the North-east, for damages of up to £2m for unfair dismissal. United is defending the action. Mr Staples is also taking United to an industrial tribunal, and is seeking extra compensation for bonus and share option packages.

Mr Staples was sacked after a very public falling out with Sir Desmond Pither, the controversial chairman of United who himself was forced to leave United last month due to shareholder pressure. United denies that Mr Staples' decision to leave his wife and move in with Sir Desmond Pither's former secretary was a factor in his departure.

Mr Staples will take over at Amey from Eddie King, the current chief executive, next Monday. Mr King will continue as a director until he retires in February 1998, when he will be 62.

At his new job Mr Staples will be paid a package of around a quarter of a million pounds. Neil Ashley, chairman of Amey,

said Mr Staples' pay would be "commensurate to others in the industry - similar to Eddie King's".

Mr King had a one-year rolling contract under which he received £255,000 for the year to December 1996, which included a basic salary of £217,000 plus pensions contributions of £40,000.

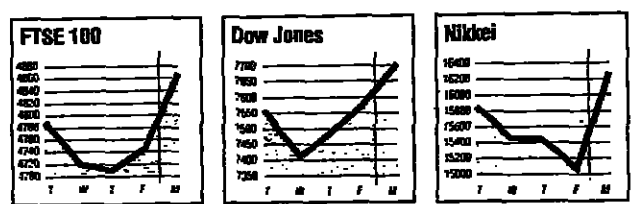
Mr Ashley said Amey was not worried by the controversial circumstances in which Mr Staples left United. "Virtually everyone I spoke to gave him a good write-up. I understand a clash of personalities occurred. That certainly doesn't reflect on his capability, skills or experience."

The chairman described Mr Staples as being a leading light in contracting for the last 20 years, with a successful spell at Barmac. He also had experience of facilities management, the area which Amey has earmarked for expansion, Mr Ashley said.

Amey plans to make a series of acquisitions, and Mr Staples will be in charge of deciding what to go after, the chairman said.

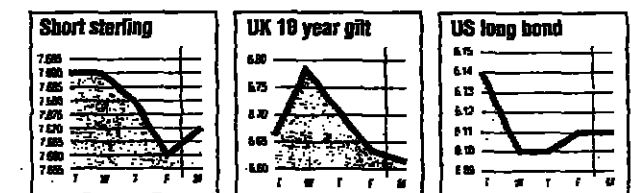
"He was the driving force behind the link-up between Norweb and North West Water which produced United Utilities," Mr Ashley said.

STOCK MARKETS



Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	4867.00	125.20	2.64	5367.20	3882.70	3.59
FTSE 250	4224.80	50.20	1.20	4663.80	3321.80	3.50
FTSE 350	2346.40	52.50	2.29	2570.50	1935.70	3.57
FTSE All Share	2299.43	48.09	2.14	2507.68	1935.55	3.55
FTSE SmallCap	2288.1	1.50	0.07	2407.40	2127.50	3.26
FTSE Floating	1255.2	2.90	0.23	1346.50	1198.70	3.42
FTSE AIM	984.1	-1.80	-0.18	1138.00	965.90	1.06
Dow Jones	7701.90	125.74	1.66	8256.03	6236.05	1.75
Nikkei	16083.32	1200.80	7.66	21460.57	14965.19	0.95
Hong Kong	10419.75	462.42	4.54	16620.31	8775.88	3.94
Dax	3794.61	63.57	1.71	4458.88	2756.11	2.10

INTEREST RATES

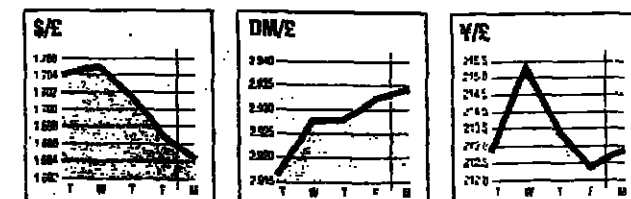


Money Market Rates	3 month	6 month	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year
UK	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50
US	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
Japan	4.41	4.41	4.41	4.41	4.41	4.41	4.41	4.41
Germany	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
United Discos 219.50 13.14	Yale and Cato 319.50 -7.00
Schroders 1570.00 142.00	Costs Virella 104.50 -2.00
Hermings Japan 138.25 9.75	Bodycote Ind 837.5 -17.5
Racal Electronic 214.50 13.00	London Clubs 282 -4

CURRENCIES



Pound	Dollar	DM	Yen
Dollar 1.8333 -0.07c	1.8705	1.5506 +0.03p	0.5688
D-Mark 2.9332 +0.02p	2.5089	D-Mark 1.7313 +0.02p	1.5057
Yen 212.85 -42.32	186.22	Yen 125.99 -41.35	111.43
£ index 104.10 +0.20	92.00	\$ index 105.10 +0.50	96.20

OTHER INDICATORS

all £ m	Chm	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr Ago	Next Day
Brent Oil (\$)	19.46	-0.30	22.26	GDP	114.00	3.90	109.7
Gold (\$)	303.75	0.65	379.10	RPI	159.50	3.7	153.81
Silver (\$)	5.14	0.08	4.84	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Dust-up at Dial-a-Cab as vote swings against float

The flotation of Dial-a-Cab, the London black taxi co-operative, has been postponed after hate mail was sent to its financial advisers, English Trust, and a 'death threat' was allegedly made to a director.

Dial-a-Cab had been due to float on the Alternative Investment Market in the spring, but a vote at a meeting on Sunday, attended by 1,290 of the co-operative's 1,628 members failed to get the necessary 75 per cent approval. Only 53 per cent of those present voted in favour of the float.

Brian Rice, Dial-a-Cab's chairman, yesterday expressed disappointment

at the vote, saying that he and all other directors bar one were "100 per cent behind" the proposals. But his view was not shared by the many taxi drivers who supported David Clegg, the one dissenting director.

One driver yesterday attributed the vote result to a lack of member consultation. "It was presented to us as a fait accompli," he said.

Discussion among cabbies of the proposals prior to Sunday's meeting was marred by claims and counter-claims of driver intimidation, apparently sparked by a change of heart by Mr Clegg. Mr Clegg originally sup-

ported the plans, but altered his stance shortly before Sunday's meeting.

"David [Clegg] didn't want to go along with the proposals, but, being on the board, he was caught on the horns of a dilemma. But we [the drivers] told him not to keep his mouth shut, but to speak up," explained one driver.

After Mr Clegg's apparent U-turn, internal debate over the conversion issue escalated last week.

"After David withdrew his support, English Trust received some hate mail," Mr Rice said. "Then an argument ensued between one of the members and David Clegg. The

member made a remark to David along the lines of 'I could murder you' or 'I could kill you'. David then notified the police."

Dial-a-Cab was keen to play down the alleged death threats yesterday, which, following interviews with the parties involved, will not be investigated further by the police. "It was a figurative remark, made in the heat of the moment," Mr Rice said. One taxi driver remarked: "The man [who made the threat] doesn't have the puff in him to do anything, quite frankly".

Mr Clegg was adamant yesterday that he would not be resigning from

the board, despite a request to quit from Mr Rice. His decision was supported by many taxi drivers. One said: "He's the only man on the board who supports our views."

Mr Rice said he would not be pursuing flotation proposals. He added: "I could do, but I don't intend to. We were 20 per cent short [of the required majority] and I don't consider that ... we could make up the ground."

The flotation issue will again be on the agenda when the cabbies convene a week on Sunday for the annual meeting.

— Leo Paterson

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

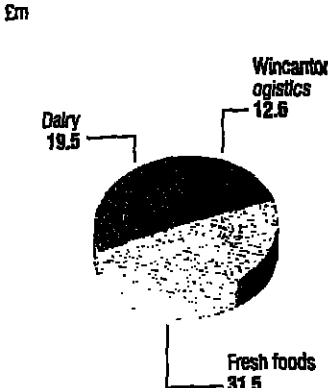
EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

Unigate: At a glance

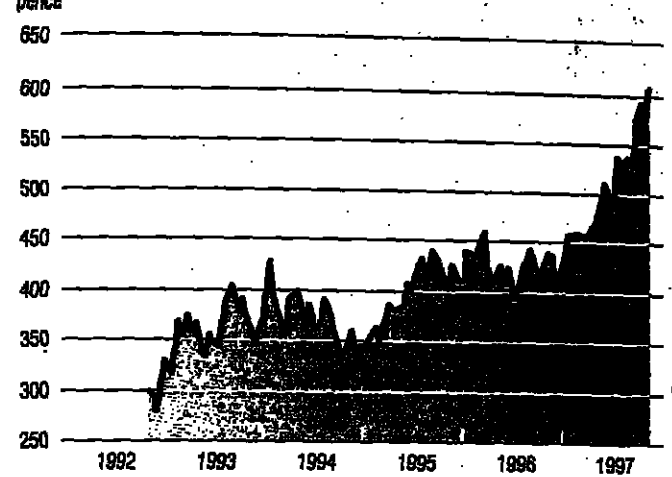
Market value: £1.43bn, share price 599p

Five-year record	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	1.89	2.13	2.41
Pre-tax profits (£m)	58.3	255.7	295.7
Earnings per share (p)	19.8	113	87.2
Dividends per share (p)	18.2	19.3	21.3

Operating profit by activity



Share price



emile may start to fall off. The other uncertainty is whether Emap will be successful in bidding for IPC, Reed Elsevier's consumer magazine division. Merrill Lynch says Emap is trading on a price/earnings ratio of 18 for the year to March 1999 on the basis of forecast profits of £158m. That looks cheap compared to its immediate peer group, Reed and Reuters, but it is full enough compared to expected growth in the low teens.

Sterling dents British Steel

British Steel is the ultimate cyclical stock, riding the twin roller-coasters of the economic cycle and the foreign exchange markets. The gyrations it experiences as a result have made the company a dismal long-term investment but a great opportunity for anyone who fancies they have a short-term economic or financial crystal ball.

Although the shares are no higher than they were in 1989, buying at the end of 1992 would have increased your investment five-fold in the following four years.

Profits of £143m for the six months to September were well ahead of expectations although almost halved from last year's £262m, and the shares, now 40 per cent owned by bullish American investors, nudged 3.75p higher to 148.75p in response.

The company had warned six months ago that the full impact of sterling's appreciation had yet to be felt and it was right, only a little less than expected.

Demand for the company's steel is actually pretty buoyant just now, with the car and construction industries in fine fettle - volumes were 4 per cent higher and prices have started to firm in local currency terms.

All the benefit was eroded by the effects of the soaring pound, which has risen by around 30 per cent against the mark over the past two years. Almost all steel in Europe is traded in marks, making British Steel less competitive against European rivals in their markets and more vulnerable to imports at home.

One of the reasons British Steel's shares are so volatile is that small movements in currencies can have a dramatic impact on forecasts. One analyst yesterday hiked his estimate for the year to next March from £220m to £400m.

If that is achieved, the company will have weathered the current downturn a lot better than the previous slump in the early 1990s and its big discount to the rest of the market, underpinned by a 6.7 per cent net yield, might look unjustified.

United Biscuits to net £241m in swap deal with PepsiCo

United Biscuits yesterday announced it would gain £241m from an asset swap deal with its arch-rival PepsiCo. As Andrew Verity reports, the deal marks the end of a troubled time for UB which has seen shares underperform the market and lose battles for market share with PepsiCo.

UB said it would return £150m to shareholders no later than July next year after sealing the deal, which, the company says, should also enhance earnings. Under the terms of the deal, PepsiCo will buy the rights to UB's "Nibbit" snack brand as well as its French snack business and a factory in Veume, Belgium. UB will in turn buy PepsiCo's French biscuit operation, Biscuiterie Nantaise, which makes France's favourite sandwich biscuit, "le BN".

UB is also selling two Australian subsidiaries which have fallen prey to an antipodean craze for "Tazos", a Mexican-style biscuit made by PepsiCo. Both the Original Pretzel Company

and the Smith's Snackfood Company, which are owned by UB, have lost market share because of the popularity of collectable plastic discs placed in Tazo snack packets.

UB said that after the £150m had been returned to shareholders, it would use the remaining £91m to reduce borrowings and invest in an unnamed "series of strategic initiatives".

Colin Short, UB's chairman, said: "Today's deal represents a very significant development for UB. It gives us a stronger business platform from which to drive for growth in our international biscuit operations and UK food portfolio."

The swap of assets follows a troubled year for UB which has seen it lose market share in its battles with PepsiCo. It also represents a climbdown for represents a climbdown for UB's chief executive, Eric Nicoli, who pledged in September that he would "see off" PepsiCo's challenge in Australia.

However, UB has avoided a mooted sell-off of its flagship British crisp brand, KP, which has also been slipping in popularity against Walker's crisps, owned by PepsiCo. Mr Nicoli

admitted last month that KP could not keep pace with Walker's, which now holds a 50 per cent share of the market against just 5 per cent for KP.

Investors greeted news of the disposals with a sigh of relief, marking up UB's share price by 25p to 219p. UB's shares have underperformed both the sector and the market by almost 20 per cent this year.

The company said profits from its French, Belgian and Australian brands had suffered as a consequence of the strength of sterling. Sales of biscuits from Biscuiterie Nationale in France had also been hit.

The deal needs approval from regulators and from the shareholders of UB, who will be called to an extraordinary general meeting "as soon as is practicable".

Despite yesterday's share price rise, UB's equity still remains well below the 300p to 350p level it enjoyed before announcing gloomy results in 1995. It is now aiming to boost its share of the own-brands market, the growth of which in the big supermarkets has hit sales of its branded products.

Cash pile is key factor at Unigate

Unigate has been a good investment over the past three years as shareholders have focused more on the steadily growing fresh foods side of the business and less on the slowly declining milk arm. Although the balance of those two has resulted in only gradually improving profits, the re-rating of the shares over the past three years has seen them double in value to yesterday's 600p, up 5p.

Profits for the six months to September were in line or slightly better than analysts' expectations. Pre-tax profits increased 11 per cent to £67.4m thanks to higher underlying profits and more interest on Unigate's still burgeoning cash pile. Earnings per share of 21.3p were 10 per cent higher and the interim dividend rose 7 per cent to 7.5p.

Behind the headline figures lay good growth in the food operations - fresh foods and dairy - and a steady performance from the Wincanton logistics business which is recovering from last year's transport problems.

St Ivel's chilled products were the driving force, with the Uterly Buttery and Vitalite spreads giving Unigate an impressive 24 per cent share of that market and Shape yogurts posting a 25 per cent volume gain after a marketing push.

Dairy recorded an 11 per cent increase in profits, on modestly rising turnover, thanks to lower raw milk

prices and cost reductions. The problems over the past four years since the Milk Marketing Board was replaced by the private monopoly Milk Marque now appear to be behind the company.

From an investment point of view, what matters is what Unigate plans to do with its £170m cash pile. Sir Ross Buckland, chief executive, was pretty coy on that subject yesterday, although he did say a share buyback was less likely than further acquisitions. That is good news, because a return of cash to shareholders could only expect to enhance earnings per share by around 7 per cent, whereas a sensible acquisition ought to be able to add more in the medium term.

Even without further acquisitions, Unigate's shares still look reasonable value even after their recent run. With analysts forecasting an acceleration of profits growth to £140m this year and £150m next time, they trade on an undemanding prospective price/earnings multiple of around 13. That discount is probably an unfair reflection of what are now much higher quality earnings.

Emap could hit problems

It's been a bit quieter at Emap since its recent boardroom spat, but things have been bubbling away in the background, as yesterday's £85m acquisition of Macmillan Magazines' health services

division indicated. Through the deal, Emap has inherited six well-known trade titles, including *Nursing Times* and *Health Services Journal*, and analysts are confident that Emap will be able to make cost-savings of up to £1m on the business, which made operating profits of £8.4m last year.

Results for the half year to the end of September were good, with pre-tax profits up 27 per cent to £64.5m. The company is taking advantage of the buoyant economy and falling paper prices by almost doubling its investment in its magazines and radio stations this year to around £14m. Consumer magazines turned in a dazzling performance in the UK, although the French titles suffered on translation because of the strength of sterling and the weaker economy across the Channel.

The second half of the year will see some big new launches like *Red*, a women's magazine which hits the street in the UK in the New Year. There will also be new launches in France.

Radio didn't have such a good tale to tell, with advertising growth suffering from management changes. The 10 per cent rise compared with the industry average of 14 per cent.

Despite the strong figures, there are significant question marks over Emap's future. Robin Miller, chief executive, said yesterday that although there would be growth in the second half, it would not be as strong as it has been in the past six months. Paper prices are likely to rise again, and increases in advertising rev-

IN BRIEF

BSkyB finance director quits

British Sky Broadcasting Group said Richard Brooke had resigned as group finance director, with effect from the end of this month. He will be succeeded by Nick Carrington, who has been chief financial officer since June 1995. Mr Brooke will be taking up the position of managing director of St James's Investment Partnership, which specialises in developing media projects.

Sinclair launches £10.7m bid

Sinclair Montrose launched a recommended £10.7m offer for The Premiere Group. It is offering 22 of its shares for every 20 Premiere shares. Premiere achieved pre-tax profits of £670,000 on turnover of £18.39m in the period from 1 May to 31 December 1996. Sinclair said the acquisition would provide opportunities for the enlarged group, enhancing growth of Match's healthcare contract business through Premiere's ability to supply clinical and non-clinical personnel, greater geographic coverage and enhanced margins.

Racal in Saudi radio deal

Racal Electronics has been selected by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Defence and Aviation to supply Panther-V VHF tactical frequency-hopping radios to all Royal Saudi Land Forces. The agreement will see the local manufacture and integration of many thousands of radios into all main land-based platforms operated by the Saudi Land Forces. Racal said it expects this programme to result in orders worth "well in excess of £100m over the next 10 years".

ABF eyes Spillers' mills

Associated British Foods said it was considering buying Spillers milling operations, a part of Dalgety Food Ingredients. ABF has formally approached the Office For Trading for clearance to buy the business. In September, Dalgety announced it intended to sell DFI, which consists of the milling operations and Spillers Consumer Foods. No financial details were given.

C&G ups mortgage rate

Cheltenham & Gloucester said its standard variable mortgage rate will increase by 0.25 percentage points to 8.7 per cent from 20 November for new applicants and 1 December for established borrowers. The interest rate on C&G's Instant Transfer Account will increase on 1 December by the same amount to 7.25 per cent gross per annum on all balances.

Shell and BP pump £1bn into Russia

Europe's two biggest oil companies separately announced \$1.7bn (£1bn) of investments in Russia to develop the country's vast oil and gas reserves. The moves are the first by Western oil companies since Russia relaxed restrictions on foreign investment in its oil industry.

The Royal Dutch/Shell Group, the world's biggest international oil company, said it would work with RAO Gazprom, the largest natural gas company, to extract gas and 500,000 barrels of oil a day.

British Petroleum, meanwhile, the world's fifth-largest oil company, said it would pay \$750m for a 10 per cent stake in AO Sidanco, Russia's fourth-largest oil company, to tap a giant Siberian gas field.

The announcements come a fortnight after Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, repealed a law that prevented foreigners from owning more than 15 per cent of a Russian oil company and signal a new confidence among western oil companies in the economic viability of Russian oil projects.

Amoco Corp of the US Chicago and ENI of Italy have expressed interest in such projects.

Hollick may link with venture capital group for football TV

Guinness Mahon Development Capital (GMDC), the venture capital company, is considering linking with United News & Media to develop pay-TV channels for Glasgow Rangers and Derby County football clubs.

United already has links with GMDC through a £2.5m investment in the group's Global Rights Fund. The fund specialises in backing unquoted companies involved in intellectual properties in the media, entertainment, information and leisure industries.

Gordon Power, managing director of GMDC, said yesterday that discussions with Rangers and Derby were going on, but it would be some time before a deal was signed.

"There are an enormous quantity of rights available," he said. "The careful management and exploitation of sports rights

needs considerable thought." GMDC would provide the initial investment in a Rangers or Derby channel and would oversee the management of the clubs' brands internationally.

United has been having talks with a wide variety of clubs in a bid to compete with other broadcasters such as Granada, which last month linked up with BSkyB and Manchester United to form MUTV.

Earlier this month, United was looking at the possibility of linking up with Southampton Leisure on a pay-TV channel for Southampton football club. Lord Hollick's media group has also been linked to plans for a Leeds United channel.

Sony Music Entertainment is the other trade investor in GMDC's media fund, with a share worth £2m.

-Cathy Newman

Emap set to create new television channel

Emap, the publishing and information group, is expected to announce within days the development of a new television channel called Magic. The venture signals the company's determination to expand its television interests.

Magic is defined as "a music channel for thirty-somethings", and will start broadcasting on cable television in the second quarter of next year.

Tim Schoonmaker, chief executive of Emap Radio, is overseeing the company's expansion into television. He said last night: "Magic will be more music, less chat. It will feature contemporary hits and acts whose appeal transcends the current singles charts."

Emap already owns a series of radio stations under the Magic banner, broadcasting to 6 million people in the North-east, the North-west and Yorkshire. Mr Schoonmaker said the Magic channel would transmit the same music to a similar audience, but across the country. The typical viewer would be a "32-year-old person with a family," he added.

Magic will use the same format as Emap's existing music video channel, The Box, which the company acquired last year. As a result, the investment in Magic will be minimal, as the infrastructure is already in place.

The Box is transmitted 24 hours a day via cable, and in the early hours via satellite on GSkyB, a joint venture between Granada and BSkyB. Emap said yesterday the channel was the most widely-viewed music channel in cable-only households.

The Magic venture follows news last month that Emap was considering creating television programmes based on some of its well-known magazine brands such as *Juni Seventeen*, *Max*, *Power*, and *FHM*.

Emap yesterday announced pre-tax profits for the six months to the end of September of £64.5m, an increase of 27 per cent. That excluded a £113.5m profit on disposals in the previous half year. The interim dividend rose 15 per cent to 4.95p.

-Cathy Newman

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OUTLOOK ON THE BANKING CRISIS IN JAPAN AND THE ARGUMENT OVER AIRBUS LAUNCH AID FOR BAe

Japan's crisis demands international action

It could only happen in Japan. Far from causing another precipitous plunge in the Tokyo stock market, the first ever post war collapse of a major Japanese commercial bank was greeted with unrestrained glee yesterday, with the Nikkei rebounding a full 8 per cent. While this might seem a curiously perverse reaction to a cataclysmic event, it is not altogether without reason. If the Japanese authorities are prepared for the first time to allow a big bank to go the wall, then that means they have an underlying confidence in the system, they believe that even if this bankruptcy is followed in short order by others, the damage to Japan's economy would be limited.

Furthermore, the insolvency seemed to be dealt with in a thoroughly business like and calm manner. The Bank of Japan stands ready to provide loans that will enable depositors in Hokkaido Takushoku Bank to get their money back, while the Bank's non performing loans are to be taken over by the Deposit Insurance Corporation, a Government backed fund that will work the loans out over a period of time. All very satisfactory.

The trouble is that from a Western point of view it is hard to see how anything has really changed. Is this not just more smoke and mirrors from the Japanese authorities? Finally a Japanese bank has been prepared to admit what everyone has known for years, that it is insolvent. We have now entered the next stage of this great Japanese illusion, that it is possible to have a painless insolvency.

While the process of bankruptcy is confined to just a few players, it may just about be possible to pull off this slight of hand. But if there is a more serious spill over into the Japanese financial system, then the illusion becomes much more difficult to maintain. At this stage, the Japanese authorities can get away with the pretence that no public money is being applied to the bail out. That would plainly not be possible if the process began to snow ball. The chances of this happening are not as remote as might be hoped. Any use of Government money could prove unacceptable to the Japanese electorate.

Without much more positive action by the Japanese Government than we have seen so far to stimulate the Japanese economy there is no reason to suppose that the present bounce in the Nikkei is any more than temporary (for the reverse view on this see Hamish McRae on page 23). Psychologically, the Japanese Government is already in that phase of thinking where the last thing it wants to do is provide a new fiscal stimulus. It is in rebuilding the public finances mode, not slash taxes frame of mind. That in turn is going to put further pressure on Japan's beleaguered banks. The ruling LDP party has proposed some use of public money to recapitalise the banking sector through the issue of a new class of preference share, but the timing of this assistance is in the lap of the gods. It could be years away. The need is more urgent.

If the Nikkei sinks below the 15,000 level, then the system moves into melt down

territory. Holdings of Japanese equities provide an important part of the reserves of all Japanese banks. At 15,000 and below, liabilities begin seriously to exceed legal reserve limits, there would be a loss of confidence, and the cost of propping up the banks might become prohibitive. Already there is worrying evidence of this spectre in the rising cost of the "Japan premium", the premium over the norm which Japanese banks have to pay for international money.

So are there no solutions? There are two possible avenues of escape, both hinted at by Larry Summers, the US Deputy Treasury Secretary, during trade talks in Japan over the past few days. The first is the possibility of an international lifeline for the region's ailing banking system. If this were seriously to be offered, there would have to be a quid pro quo, which would be measures to restimulate the Japanese economy and strengthen the yen. Neither of these two options would have seemed possible even three months ago, but the political will may now be there.

It is a measure of the seriousness of the region's economic plight that Mr Summers now gains a hearing for measures like these. The addition of Korea to the region's list of casualties has underlined the extreme dangers of the present crisis. Even Korea has entered the game of competitive devaluation. With economic growth across the region in full retreat, deflation and protectionism may not be far behind. Certainly some form of coordinated international action has become a matter

of urgency. It is still all too easy to think of the financial crisis of the Far East as somebody else's problem. Perhaps unfortunately, the world just isn't like that any more. The Far East's difficulties are all too quickly likely to become our own.

Why BAe should get launch aid

In an interesting twist to the old adage about carts and horses, Whitehall looks like it is about to put the horse before the cart by granting launch aid for the engine that will pull the new Airbus jet but not for the aircraft itself.

Rolls-Royce was handed £200m in launch investment last week to go away and build a new Trent engine to power the stretched Airbus A340. But just when British Aerospace thought it was about to get a similar handout to make the wings, the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, appears to have dug his heels in.

Things are sticky enough in Dubai at the best of times. When this piece of unwelcome news filtered through to BAe executives attending the local air show yesterday the response was a collective outbreak of cold sweats. A lot of taxpayers' money is at stake here - the BAe and Rolls Royce aid applications together come to £320m. Nor is BAe noticeably short of cash with a £10bn order book and the drip feed of the Al Yamamah arms for oil project with the Saudis to keep it ticking over for the next decade.

Yet it would appear odd to back the engines and not the airframe when the Government has already satisfied itself that it will get a commercial return from the stretched A340 programme. It would seem all the odder when the Germans and French are backing the programme and when the four partner governments in Airbus are jockeying to put their respective industrial partners in the driving seat when the consortium is turned into a commercial entity in 1999.

It is always possible that this is a last minute piece of brinkmanship on the part of the Government designed to extract a better deal for the taxpayer. It is always possible that BAe has played its hand badly by making it obvious that the new Airbus would go ahead whether it received launch aid or not - the trap that Rolls fell into when it asked for and was refused aid for the original Trent programme.

It is always possible that BAe's threat to up sticks and build the wings on the Continent is a hollow one. Given BAe's existing Airbus investments in the UK and its highly trained workforce here, this could prove a highly costly fit of pique, dwarfing the size of the launch aid BAe is trying to extract. All the same, this is an odd way for the natural party of business to go about cementing its new-found friendships.

The Government should cough up the money and be done. If this is such a sure-win commercial proposition as the Government suggests, then it will get its money back in spades anyway.



Tokyo in turmoil: A willingness to let an unhealthy bank go under appears to have reassured the markets

Hong Kong gains breathing space but Korea suffers further

The surge in the Japanese stock market yesterday gave a fillip to other Asian markets, particularly Hong Kong. However, Stephen Vines in Hong Kong reports that Tokyo's rise failed to help neighbouring South Korea avoid share price and currency falls.

interest rates were set to ease. Miles Rimington, from Crosby Securities, said that traders saw what was happening in Tokyo and were mindful of Friday's rise in Wall Street, ensuring that there was "certainly going to be a positive feeling".

No one is expressing unqualified optimism but market-makers have noted that the recent slump in share prices has been broken by three days of solid gains, taking the stock market up 8.45 per cent.

With the Hang Seng Index now at 10,419, comfortably above the 10,000 level, there is hope that it might test 11,000

which could be spurred by a favourable outcome to a three day "financial summit" now under way in the Chinese capital, where senior leaders are discussing financial reforms.

As usual the Chinese authorities are not forthcoming about the agenda but it is believed that discussions will focus on urgently needed reform of the banking sector, which, by and large, is technically bankrupt.

Estimates of the level of bad debt vary but it seems that some 13 per cent of loans are non-performing. The challenge for the Chinese leadership is to

turn the banks into commercial institutions, operating on recognised lending criteria.

Meanwhile in South Korea the central bank has put immense pressure on the government to consider economic reform by suddenly withdrawing its effort to prevent the further devaluation of the currency.

Having declared that it was holding a "Mugshot Line" to keep the Korean won below an exchange rate of 1,000 to the US dollar, the bank said yesterday it would no longer intervene in the money markets. The won promptly slipped to a historic low of 1008.6.

The blue chip Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong rose 4.6 per cent both on the good news from Tokyo and on hopes that high

Japanese stocks rally despite collapse of country's tenth biggest bank

During a remarkable day in Tokyo yesterday, the stock exchange scored one of its biggest ever gains, just hours after seemingly catastrophic news: the long-awaited collapse of the country's tenth biggest bank.

Richard Lloyd Parry reports from Tokyo.

performing loans will be bought out by the Deposit Insurance Corporation, a government-backed fund.

This combination of support for individual depositors coupled with a willingness to let an unhealthy bank go under appears to have reassured the markets that the government is serious about financial reform while keeping casualties to a minimum. "Today's step underscores that the authorities are prepared to let capitalism work," said Jesper Koll, the chief economist of J P Morgan in Japan. "The previous Japan doctrine of 'too small to fail' has been abandoned and full-blown consolidation is now under way".

Until two years ago, Japanese financial institutions operated in a highly regulated and protected environment under the wing of the powerful Ministry of Finance, which has traditionally propped up ailing banks. Recently however, in an attempt to recover from a lingering slump, the Japanese government has promised to open up the financial markets

to new competition and become less tolerant of lame ducks. Since 1995 three regional banks and several credit unions have gone under. Hokkaido Takushoku (also known as Hokutaku) is the first of the 20 big "city" banks to fail, and analysts in Tokyo predicted yesterday that it would not be the last.

Japanese banks declared problem loans worth 27.9 trillion yen (£132bn) at the end of March, but independent reckonings put the true total much higher. Serious problems could arise if the liabilities of busted banks exceed the capacity of the Deposit Insurance Corporation, which was set up to protect depositors and maintain confidence. Yesterday, the US deputy treasury secretary, Lawrence Summers, urged the government to use public money to bail out lenders. But the use of public funds to save ill-managed institutions has proved disastrously unpopular in the past, and the political risks are high.

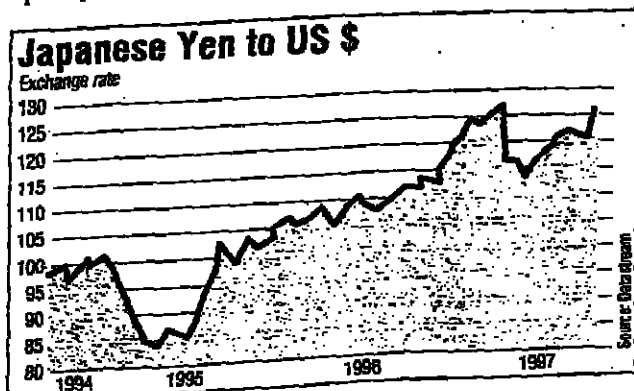
Hokkaido Takushoku, based in Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido, was known to have been ailing for months, and in August, it closed most of its overseas operations. Last month it postponed a planned merger with another Hokkaido-based bank after disagreements over how to handle its burden of bad debts, which were known to total ¥935bn at the end of March.

"In addition to lower credit ratings and weak stock prices, which reflected recent worries about the creditworthiness of our bank, the recent collapse of financial firms has made it increasingly difficult for us to raise money in the short-term money market," the bank said in a statement yesterday. "We had to reach a judgement that we would not be able to continue our operations."

The failure will no doubt mean an increase in the so-called "Japan premium", the mark up on borrowing which Japanese banks face on the international market. Yesterday morning, three-month Euro-dollar loans in the interbank money market in London were costing Japanese institutions 0.46 per cent higher than European and US banks.

In Hokkaido, the day-to-day operations of Hokutaku will be taken over by North Pacific Bank. Among the victims of the failure will be a tie-up with Barclays Bank which agreed last June jointly to develop new financial products with Hokutaku.

Hamish McRae, page 23



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SPECIAL REPORT

Feelgood factor pushes British air fares to new high

An economic upturn has fuelled demand for constantly-improving levels of service. Businessmen themselves are delighted – which is more than can be said for their company accountants.

If you go down to the Executive Lounge at Heathrow Terminal Four today, you will find a couple of David Hockney originals decorating the north wall. These are not just intended to brighten up the place;

they are for sale, at £28,000 and £34,000 respectively. When you consider that this is not the First Class or Concorde Lounge, but the venue for mainstream business travellers, it becomes clear that the airlines feel that business travel from Britain is awash with a feelgood factor and hard cash.

On the opening day of the World Travel Market in Earl's Court, London, yesterday, leading travel industry figures were painting a glowing picture of prospects in the near future. This kind of confidence from suppliers can be disconcerting if you are a consumer.

"Historically, UK has had

some of the lowest fares in Europe", says Kyle Davis, head of purchasing management for American Express. "That difference has been eliminated."

In the past two years, business air fares have risen more rapidly in Britain than in any other European country, according to the Amex quarterly survey. Transatlantic fares have risen 22 per cent in two years, with another 12 per cent rise expected for the coming year. Recent economic jitters in Asia are not expected to attenuate increases for eastbound routes, either: a year from now, says Mr Davis, fares could rise 14 per cent.

On the supply side, one reason for the increase is the cost of providing higher quality. The battles to provide the greatest amount of legroom, the most comfortable seats or the swiftest arrival lounge facilities have cost the airlines a fortune, and someone has to pay – which is perhaps why the more relaxed and refreshed that business travellers appear, the less comfortable are company accountants.

The key to increased costs, though, is demand. Just as business travel retreats rapidly in a downturn, in a confident economic mood the amount of activity increases fiercely. Capacity – whether in top-class hotels, or in business-class on aircraft departing Heathrow – is constrained, and as in any market the price rises accordingly.

It wasn't supposed to be like this, at least within Europe. This spring, full "cabotage" took effect in the European Union. The

leading airlines, including Lufthansa and United Airlines.

Virgin Atlantic is proving promiscuous: having just got out of bed with Delta on its transatlantic code-shares, it is now snuggling up to Continental Airlines – while maintaining its long-standing relationship with Malaysia Airlines.

Some time before the end of the year, these flights will become easier to catch for people travelling from Central London. The first stage of the Heathrow Express starts running soon, presaging the 15-minute journey from Paddington that is planned for next June. As the survey of links to the airport shows (opposite), the new service cannot begin soon enough.

What happens, though, when you get there? As the parties involved in the longest-running planning inquiry in history know all too well, Heathrow is running at full capacity and a fifth terminal – if agreed – will not be operating until some years into the next millennium. Yet, as Neil Taylor argues on page 27, Britain's business travellers are overlooking the increasing opportunities to fly from local airports that are presently showing an embarrassing amount of spare capacity.

The third London "airport", meanwhile, is looking increasingly like Waterloo International. On 14 December, Eurostar services from London to Brussels accelerate by half an hour. This should mean that services to the Belgian capital, so long the poor relation to Paris, become much more attractive to the business traveller. And to the company accountant, too, if you follow Sue Wheat's advice on page 26 for

BY SIMON CALDER

whose business- es are based in the European Union, will have the right to trade anywhere in the Union, stopping off in as many places as they want to regardless of national boundaries."

In practice, though, the effect for the business traveller has been strictly marginal. An Irish airline, Ryanair, now flies from Stansted in Essex to a couple of obscure airports in Sweden and Norway, which it labels "Stockholm South" and "Oslo South" respectively. A pair of entrepreneurs from southern Europe are opening up Luton as a cut-price gateway. British Airways itself announced yesterday that it planned to launch its own no-frills airline offering cheap fares to Europe.

But what hinders the plans of Stelios Haji-Iannou of easyJet and Franco Mancassola of Debonair is that Heathrow and Gatwick are the first choices for most business travellers. These two airports have achieved the critical mass that permits frequent services: if you miss the Heathrow departure to JFK, there will be another one along in an hour – if not sooner.

There's a good chance that the aircraft you fly on will be operated by American Airlines or British Airways. But the alliance which both are keen to form is still stacking over Brussels, waiting for the congestion of competition legislation to clear. Meanwhile the Star Alliance is up and flying, with business travellers able to benefit from through check-in and easy transfers on some of the world's

a cheap, cheerful yet business-like sojourn in Brussels. Most "proper" business hotels are reaping the rewards of the economic upswing, charging high rates for increasingly sophisticated levels of service. Some travellers, though, regret the increasing homogenisation of the business hotel; on page 26, Rhianon Batten offers more homely alternatives for visitors to Europe's premier business city, London.

You cannot, for the foreseeable future, pay for your London hotel with the euro. While politicians bicker about Britain's participation, transaction costs continue to add considerably to the cost of doing business abroad. David Watts suggests (opposite) how plastic can take some of the strain.

The first opportunity that many British business travellers will have to use the euro will be on the Heathrow Express, a development that shows the foresightedness of at least some of Britain's rail operators.

The railway is a 19th-century innovation that is undergoing a resurgence (post-privatisation problems within the UK notwithstanding). Another 19th-century development, telecommunication, is girdling the globe with high-speed digital links. But predictions that telecommuting and video-conferencing will replace business travel appear unfounded. Just as touring art galleries on the Internet will never match the joy of a Hockney original, nothing can beat a face-to-face meeting.

The Hea

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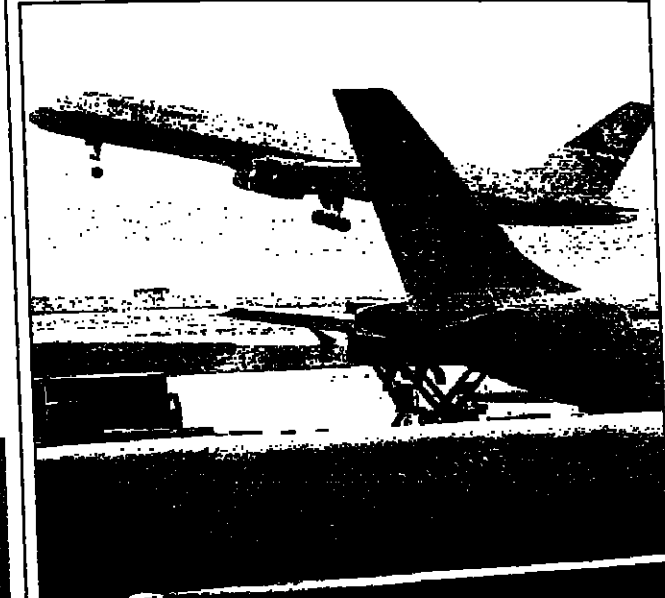
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On the up: over the past two years business air fares from Britain have risen sharply

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The Heathrow Express will be along next year. But for now ...

Getting from Britain's biggest city to Europe's busiest airport has never been easy. From June, the Heathrow Express should simplify matters. In the meantime, says Simon Calder, the competitors for least-bad way to Heathrow are many and various.

So you think you know your airport codes, from ABZ (Aberdeen) via LHR (Heathrow) to ZAG (Zagreb)? OK, then, identify QQP.

The trick in this question is that QQP is not an airport at all, but a railway station - Paddington, London W2, to be precise. But from next June, the code will begin to appear on air tickets. The shortest "flight" possible from Heathrow airport should be the 15-minute connection to central London. Within a year of the start-up, through check-in of baggage will be a reality, and QQP to YYZ (Paddington to Toronto) should be a cinch.

The Heathrow Express link is basically a case of Britain's biggest airport catching up with the rest of the Europe. From Gatwick and Manchester to Frankfurt and Zurich, high-speed rail links are *de rigueur* for any self-respecting airport.

Heathrow's owner, BAA, has set itself the ambitious task of 50 per cent of passengers arriving at the airport by public transport.

Starting next summer, trains will run from Paddington station to the airport four times an hour from dawn until late. The trip to the central area (Terminals One, Two and Three) should take a flat 15 minutes, with Terminal Four five minutes further on. If your airline has not included QQP on your itinerary, you can pay for the trip on board - or pay in several currencies, including the euro, at ticket machines.



In theory, the tube should represent the simplest and most efficient means of getting to Heathrow. In practice it can be one of the longest - and most stressful

The Heathrow Express was due for completion this year, but because of tunnelling problems at the airport it is not now planned to open until June 1998. A stop-gap scheme is expected to be introduced before the end of the year: the Heathrow Fast Train. This will involve a train from Paddington to a new station, Heathrow Junction, and a bus from there to the terminals. The scheduled journey time is 30 minutes, and the fare will be £5. When the Heathrow Express finally begins, the trip length should be halved and the fare will probably double.

In the meantime, all the other options have been considered for the most comprehensive survey so far of airport links. I have spent the year sampling alternative ways to cover the 15 miles from the Eurostar terminal at Waterloo to Heathrow. To maintain a level runway, I set a rule to avoid peak travel times. Stress factors are rated out of a maximum 10.

It hasn't been fun, it hasn't been clever, but it has been instructive.

Airbus
What could be better than being picked up right outside the airport terminal by a big red bus? Answer: being picked up right outside the airport terminal by a big red bus that goes straight to London, rather than cruising around the rest of the airport first.

Airbus A1 is an extra-luxurious double-decker that collects passengers from outside the arrivals hall and deposits them at Victoria station. Unfortunately, if you board at Terminal Two then you will see a lot of Heathrow - including a little-known coach station around the back of Terminal Three - before passing Terminal Two about 15 minutes after you left it.

Once on the motorway, though, you can expect a smooth, fast trip into London. To reach Waterloo, you will need to jump into a cab.

Fare: £6 bus fare plus £4 cab fare. Time: 60 minutes. Stress factor: 5.

Taxi
Whether you start at Waterloo or Heathrow, you can expect a

queue. But a cab is a reliable, if expensive, link.

Fare: £38 including a 10 per cent tip. Time: 40 minutes. Stress factor: 2.

Thames Trains
Take the Bakerloo Line north-bound from Waterloo to discover the existing fast(-ish) link from Paddington station. Hop on a "Thames Turbo" to Hayes & Harlington, step up from the station and climb aboard the bus to Heathrow Central. This journey sounds messy, but if the connections work it can be swifter than the Tube.

Fare: £5.10. Time: 60 minutes (though if you just miss the train or the bus it could be a quarter-hour longer). Stress factor: 3 (though this could double if the connections falter).

South West Trains
If your destination is Terminal Four and you are travelling light, this is the ideal link. A train from Waterloo to Feltham takes less than 30 minutes, and the airport is a half-hour hike from there. I felt more relaxed arriving by this route than by any other.

Fare: £3.20. Time: 60 minutes. Stress factor: 1.

Bicycle
Cycling from Waterloo station to Heathrow airport, you head more or less due west. This happens to be counter to the prevailing winds. But a bike removes all potential problems with public transport and traffic congestion. All goes fine until the last half-mile, which is through the tunnel beneath the northern runway. Until three years ago, this was a dedicated cycle/pedestrian route; then it was opened up to cars, which chase the unfortunate cyclist - as in the film *Duel* - through the tunnel.

Fare: nil. Time: 80 minutes. Stress factor: 1 until the tunnel, then 9.

Hitch-hiking
This has genuinely been a quest to cover all the options. Starting to thumb from outside Waterloo station is not a sensible prospect. So I took the tube to Turnham Green, walked down to Chiswick High Road and out to the start of the M4. Even with a sign reading "Heathrow Please - flight at 10.45", it took three lifts to reach the airport. Not recommended, except as a bet.

Fare: £1.80. Time: 120 minutes. Stress factor: 7.

Night bus
The cheapest public transport option is also the smoothest - once you have dragged yourself out of bed. Start walking across Hungerford Bridge at around 4.15am. The 4.35am departure of bus N97 from Trafalgar Square, with its curious cargo of clubbers, cleaners and airport personnel, trundles around west London before winding up at Heathrow's central bus station.

Fare: £1.20. Time: 90 minutes. Stress factor: 8 upon waking up: 1 for the journey itself.

Stretched limousine
After an overnight flight from San Francisco, I couldn't quite figure out what my friends Har-



Bus lanes along the motorway certainly speed up the journey to the airport - but if you're unlucky you could find yourself being taken round the houses at Heathrow itself

riet and Jonathan were doing turning up at dawn at Heathrow. When the 40-ft limousine turned up at the kerbside, and half-a-dozen other pals popped out, I realised this was not your ordinary airport transfer. The Moët was first to be cracked open, followed shortly by a particularly robust Stolichnaya. What better way to end a hon-ey-moon?

Fare: too polite to ask. Time: who cares. Stress factor: nil, though it is surprising the gestures one gets from less well-endowed road users.

Tube
It had to happen. For each of

the above experiments, I allowed plenty of time to catch the flight. For what should have been the easiest of the lot, I trusted in the schedules.

The task was simple: my flight was just before noon, so I had to arrive at Heathrow at 11.10am. Leaving Waterloo at 10am would, I was assured, provide plenty of time.

It was all going remarkably well until just past Earl's Court, when the train began to stop between stations for no apparent reason. At Acton Town, the Piccadilly Line equivalent of purgatory, it paused for 15 minutes while two other trains came and went; nobody told me poor pas-

sengers that crossing the platform might enhance our chances of catching our flights.

Eventually the train arrived at 11.30am. When the doors slid open, the scene resembled an Olympic sprint final as everyone rushed for their flight. In the race to Terminal One, I trailed in a poor third behind a sprightly Aer Lingus stewardess and a red-faced German businessman.

The flight had already closed.

With competitors like the Piccadilly Line, the Heathrow Express need have no fear about its chances of success.

Fare: £3.20. Time: 90 minutes. Stress factor: 10.

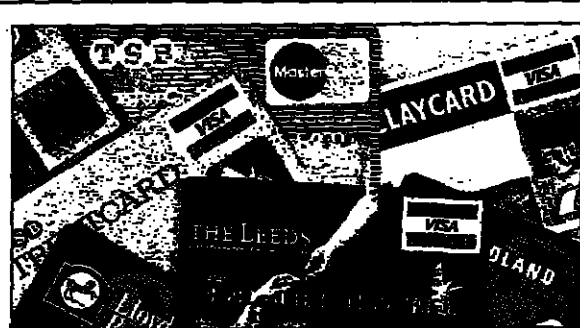
Psst! Wanna change money? No thanks, I've got my flexible friend

Changing money on foreign trips can be a time-consuming and costly business. But with plastic cards now accepted almost everywhere, it is also becoming unnecessary, argues David Watts.

Money, money, money. It is the *raison d'être* of business travel, and also indispensable to go anywhere further than your desk. But until the euro becomes established, the average business traveller will continue to battle with conversion rates and bureaux de change, preferably without losing too much of the company's cash in transaction costs.

As a basic rule of thumb, the answer is to exchange your money as few times as possible. Paying more commission than you need is just giving money away. Each time, you lose about five per cent because of the buy and sell rate spread used by exchange bureaux. Travellers' cheques can be even more expensive than currency notes since you pay commission to buy them and then there is often a charge to turn them back into cash. Travellers' cheques denoted in currency also have their value eroded by the buy and sell rates applied. If you add up all these charges and devaluations over the course of a business trip, you've probably given away the equivalent of a slap-up dinner or two for valuable contacts.

A single European currency would have some advantages for travellers by getting rid of the need to change money when making trips between member countries. Of course, things would still cost varying amounts in the different countries but the euro in your pocket would be the same, so all the exchange costs and confusion would be gone. But why wait for the politicians? You can already simplify your travelling fi-



PLASTIC GUIDE TO THE WORLD

- Paying with plastic: places where you can expect to pay by credit card for most tourist/business needs, where perhaps you wouldn't expect to be able to: Colombia, Peru, Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela.
- Paying with plastic: places where you rarely can, where perhaps you would expect to be able to: Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, the Gambia, Hungary.
- Getting cash: places that offer tourist-friendly Automatic Teller Machines, where perhaps you wouldn't expect them: Colombia, Mexico, Turkey.
- Getting cash: places that don't offer tourist-friendly Automatic Teller Machines, where perhaps you would expect them: Belize, Brazil (though Visa is acceptable in some places), Costa Rica, Japan (though MasterCard is becoming increasingly acceptable), New Zealand, Switzerland (MasterCard more likely to be accepted than Visa).
- Where MasterCard is more acceptable than Visa: Egypt, Germany, Switzerland.
- Where Visa is more acceptable than MasterCard: Cyprus, Gibraltar, Philippines, Poland, United Arab Emirates.
- Where any US-issued credit card is unacceptable: Cuba.

Compiled from information supplied by Barclaycard, and travellers' reports.

nces and make them cheaper - and not just in Europe. A single monetary system already operates around the globe and offers competitive exchange rates, low charges and great versatility.

Plastic cards have been the mainstay of my travel finances for several years, and at the dawn of the 21st century sure-

ly the time when electronic money is the norm for travellers must be just around the corner. A small amount of local currency is useful when you first arrive in a country, and a couple of travellers' cheques will act as a safety net in emergencies, but credit and debit cards should do the job the rest of the time. Yet before you head off to some re-

mote corner of the world with nothing but your flexible friend for company, check with the card provider on the level of coverage you can expect in your destination. If your cards work through the Visa or MasterCard system then you've got most of the globe covered.

You can get local currency from ATMs or cash advances over the counter from local banks. It's just one transaction and most cards charge a commission less than or equal to exchange bureaux. You may also be able to make purchases directly with no commission or handling charge, in such cases my card uses an equivalent sell rate adjusted by just 2.65 per cent from the spot rate. Considerably better than most exchange bureaux, which take 4-10 per cent, depending on the currency.

Despite their expense, travellers' cheques are popular because part of the cost goes towards insuring them, so if they're lost or stolen they're replaced. But is the cost justified? Your normal travel insurance should cover the loss of several hundred pounds worth of cash, so you can benefit from the lower costs of using your cards to get currency, confident in the knowledge that your wealth is still protected.

Plastic cards are also much more useful than cash or travellers' cheques when booking flights or hotels, since one phone call will confirm the deal. If you're relying on pieces of paper, your seat or bed may be sold to another business traveller because you can't hand over the money until you arrive. Add the benefit of the travel and purchase insurance that you get with many cards and you must be on to a winner.

No ordering of money in advance, no trip to the bank to collect and sign the travellers' cheques, no carrying high-value, bulging wallets. Just simple, modern technology. All you have to do is pay the bill when you get back.



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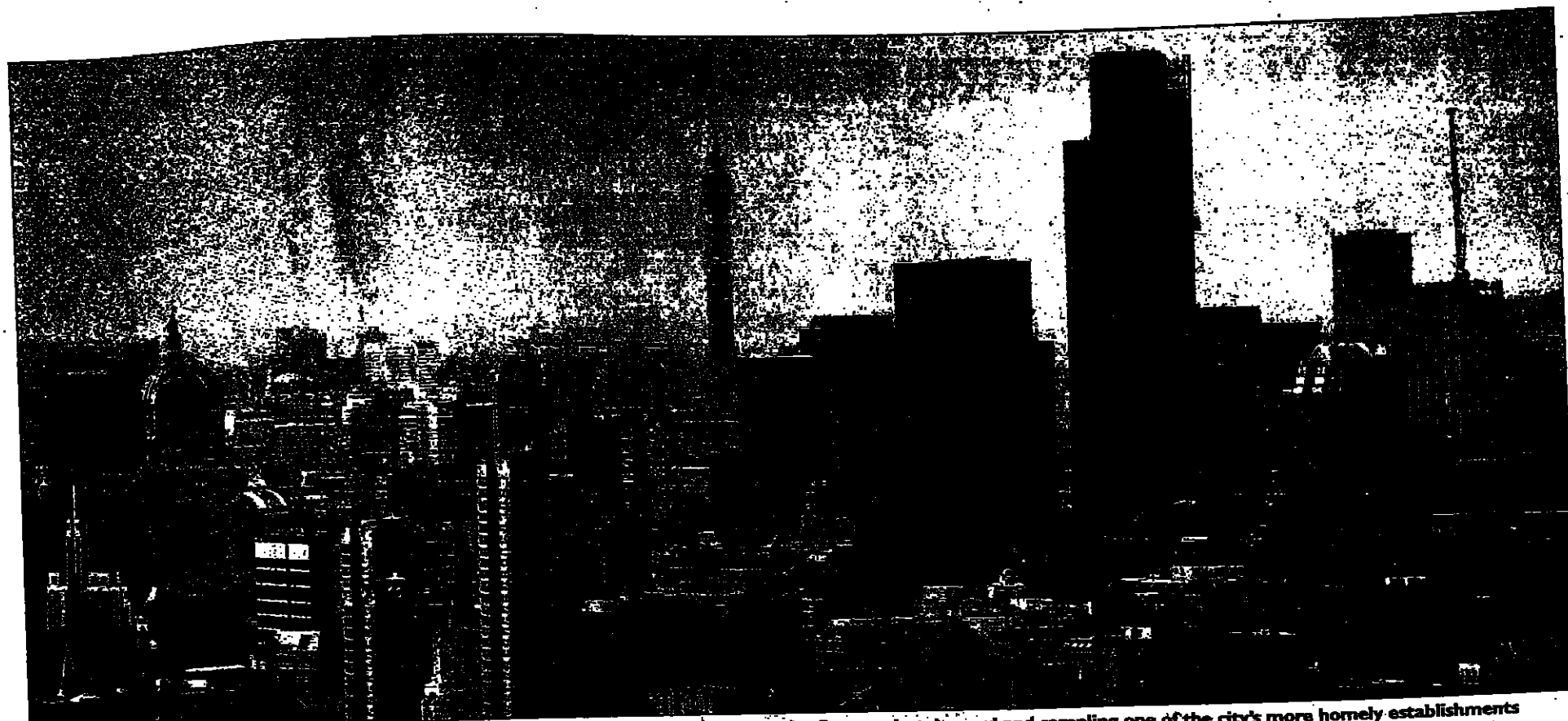
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Room with a view: a business trip to London could be enhanced by getting away from the five-star hotel crowd and sampling one of the city's more homely establishments

In London, small can be beautiful

London remains Britain and Europe's premier business city. But what alternatives are there to faceless chain hotels? Rhannon Batten checks out some less conventional – but characterful – places to check in.

Hazlett's, 6 Frith Street (0171-434 1771)

The inside of the hotel is so contrasting to the surrounding chaos of Soho that the first impression is one of complete surprise. A staircase takes you up from the elegant townhouse entrance as if you were entering the home of a wealthy relative, stuffed with interesting four poster beds to try out, pictures to peer at and unusual furnishings to toy with.

The bookcase in the drawing room is impressively filled with the books of famous authors who've stayed here. Each of the cosy rooms is packed with sturdy antique furniture and almost all the bathrooms are equipped with pretty free-standing baths. The only slight fault is that rooms at the front may be rather noisy. Single rooms cost £115, double rooms £148 and the one suite available £205. The prices do not include VAT or breakfast, which is £6.75.

Number Sixteen, 16 Summer Place (0171-589 5232)

The entrance of this hotel is currently marked out by lavender and rose tubs and the place is full of fresh flowers. The rooms are each named after a different colour with shades such as suede and lemon giving the impression that you've stepped into the Dulux catalogue. From the sound of a fountain lapping away in the garden to the sunny coloured drawing room, all

in all this is a very relaxing setting. The rooms are homely but oozing with style and the garden and conservatory are a real haven. Single rooms cost £80-115 and doubles £150-180. The price includes continental breakfast and VAT.

The Bulldog Club (0171-341 9495)

Costs £25 for annual membership and operates like a five star bed and breakfast organisation. Membership entitles you to stay in one of the homes on its list, either in London or in the countryside and all the properties are equivalent to five-star standard. Visitors receive the usual benefits of staying in a plush hotel, including full British breakfast, and all the London properties cost £95 per night for a double room with private bathroom down to £65 per night for a single room with shared bathroom.

The Beaufort, 33 Beaufort Gardens (0171-584 5252)

The hotel atmosphere is very warm and informal, rather as if you've stepped into someone else's house, with apples on the coffee table and children under the sofa. You're given a front door key on arrival and the hotel looks like a well-kept private house on a pretty Georgian square. Room prices range from £130 for a small single with shower to £185 for a large double with bath and shower. These prices don't include VAT but they do include continental breakfast, telephone and fax services, 24 hour champagne, service, afternoon tea and all drinks. Deluxe doubles and the junior suite cost £230 and £240, not including VAT. Crucially for the business traveller, other facilities include access to a nearby health club, light snacks during the day and airport pick-up or drop-off.

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For those without an unlimited expenses account, there are cheaper options – and they are not all bad, as Sue Wheat discovered while attending a conference in Brussels.

Not everybody who travels on business has a big expense account. Some of us are instructed to keep our expenses to a minimum – and that doesn't mean just leaving the mini-bar intact. In my case, travelling to a conference in Brussels on behalf of two charities I was representing, meant finding the cheapest accommodation I could, without jeopardising my professional performance the next day.

Maison Internationale at 205 Chaussee de Wavre near the centre of Brussels, was the option I chose. Some might scorn it as a youth hostel by any other name. But it is in fact perfectly positioned for anyone visiting the European Parliament and meeting with MEPs, business people and lobbyists, based in the area. (This could explain why business people vastly outnumbered backpackers.) Turn left out of the hostel, walk for five minutes past various building sites and you are in the hub of the European Parliament's administration.

Maison Internationale's facilities are perfectly adequate – although business people with prima donna-like tendencies would do best to stay away. When you arrive (check-in before 11pm) you rent clean sheets and pillow cases for 125 francs, (£2) can make yourself a hot drink, buy a beer from the bar, or relax in your room.

You don't have to share a dorm – I splashed out and went for a single room (BF660

including breakfast). No matter how hard you hunt, a TV will not be found – so a good book is necessary. Bathroom and shower facilities are shared and perfectly clean. Breakfast – which included cereal, toast, meats, cheeses and tea or coffee – competed well with other hotel breakfasts I've had, although washing up your own plates and cutlery is probably a morning activity we could all do without before a 9am meeting.

Finding Maison Internationale was probably the most difficult part of my stay. When I phoned to book from London and asked which underground station it was near, the man on reception responded with Basil Fawlty-style unhelpfulness: "I do not know, Madam – I live 80 km away." When I pressed him, he finally informed me that it was near Trone metro. The walk from Trone to the hostel takes about 20 minutes – not particularly easy if you have luggage, if it is at night, and your map is of guide book quality. I only realised the full extent of his unhelpfulness however, when on leaving the hostel I found out that I could have got a train directly from Brussels' central train station to Gare du Quartier Leopold – only two minutes' walk from the hostel. Trone is indeed the nearest metro, but the train is the most sensible way of getting there.

One and a half days of intense lobbying left me exhausted and without any energy to use my remaining afternoon window shopping in Brussels. I returned to Maison Internationale and went up to the roof garden. Here I stretched out on a garden bench, used my briefcase as a pillow, and, warmed by the autumn sun, slept for two hours. Judging by my brief trip around Brussels, it is one of the few green areas available to relax in. Maison Internationale. Tel. 00 32 2 648 9787

Fares are one way based on round-trip purchase from London Luton with Saturday night stay required. Prices exclude tax and subject to availability with limited seats. Tickets are non-refundable and non-changeable. Milan served in partnership with Azzurra Air. *Nice effective 13.12; £39 price valid until 19.12. Join 'Destinations' 10 returns, one free! For our European Vacations brochure, call 01293 886006. Call us now or contact your travel agent.

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27/BUSINESS TRAVEL

Regional airports still waiting in the wings

With Heathrow and Gatwick at full capacity, Britain has plenty of less crowded alternative airports. But, writes Neil Taylor, business travellers are failing to take advantage of their local facilities.

"Born Again". Most Bristolians will have confronted this slogan which took up the prime city-centre poster sites abandoned by the political parties after the election in May. Few can have guessed which product felt it needed messianic zeal to promote itself - it was in fact what used to be the local airport. However the message was now very different. Gone was Lutgate and here was Bristol International, following Rhoads and Turnhouse now similarly metamorphosed into Cardiff and Edinburgh. A recent candid press release from Bristol Airport shows the battle it still has to fight with Heathrow and Gatwick. Although there are five flights a day from Bristol to Amsterdam, in 1996 74,000 people from the South West still chose to fly from Heathrow.

Regional airports now have to wage several battles simultaneously.

Firstly figures such as these show how they have to fight local ignorance about the scheduled services they offer. Secondly they have to fight each other, to encourage new airlines to start an international service. Once airlines make such a move, few result in failure. Air UK/KLM and Aer Lingus pioneered such routes, Air France, Sabena and SAS have followed. Manchester has also been successful in pioneering long-haul routes to North America and to East Asia.

Thirdly, these airports are rivals for overlapping custom. Thousands of potential passengers can choose between say Prestwick and Glasgow, or

Manchester and Liverpool. East Anglia is a battleground between Cambridge and Norwich.

In seducing custom from Heathrow and Gatwick they all have the same, but effective, baits such as cheap or free car parking, shorter check-in times, good public transport links and above all, the absence of the M25.

A rather different agenda applies to Luton and Stansted airports. Fog recently diverted an Estonian Air flight from Gatwick to Luton. I expect many of the Estonians on board were happier to arrive at an airport closer in size to Tallinn than the more formidable Gatwick. Any British person not living south of the Thames

would have preferred the quicker journey home and the non-payment of a Gatwick Express ticket. Low-cost carriers such as Debonair, easyJet and Ryanair have introduced many travellers to these airports and as these airlines continue to expand, the airports will thrive with them to the detriment of both English regional airports and the other London ones.

The main difficulty for Luton and Stansted has been to convince foreign carriers that they are a more sensible London alternative both for the UK market and for their own. The number of over-subsidised national airlines quite happy to pay high charges for hopeless slots at Heathrow and Gatwick gives a newly-enhanced mean-

ing to "folie de grandeur".

British Airways must have an increasingly difficult task in maintaining and winning custom outside London whenever transfers at Heathrow are involved. The airline's current winter timetable might seem to offer many logical routings - Inverness to Amsterdam via London for instance - but the small print reveals a three-hour wait at Heathrow, and of course conceals the direct flight operated by rival Air UK which flies Inverness-Amsterdam non-stop in one hour 35 minutes.

Glaswegians returning from Moscow may be tempted by the 75-minute connecting time allowed between Heathrow Terminal Four and Terminal One but over-zealous Russian im-

migration controllers combined with quite rightly zealous Heathrow air traffic controllers all too often lead to a failed connection and future business via Copenhagen, Amsterdam or Brussels.

The latest "Heathrow Flight and Travel Information Guide" (which costs £1, unlike its free of charge regional equivalents) has a tortuous half page trying to explain which passengers need to use their Flight Connections Centre and which do not. It wisely omits altogether information on minimum connecting times to allow eight pages for a list of every shop in every terminal. In contrast to this, all regional airports revel in promoting single terminal continental hubs as an alter-

native to Heathrow. Amsterdam used to sell itself as the fourth London airport before Stansted and City became serious challengers. It now not only has competitors in the UK but also many in mainland Europe. Copenhagen and Helsinki have creamed off most of the Baltic and CIS traffic; Dublin even offers US immigration services as an incentive to use Aer Lingus regional links.

When can regional airports finally claim success? Clearly when they finally persuade Londoners to abandon their addiction to Heathrow or Gatwick. If 74,000 travellers from the West Country "enjoy" a journey to Heathrow, what does it take to encourage one in the opposite direction?

Some handy hints for haggling with the airlines

Plenty of books claim to offer the secret of cut-price air travel. But until he read Hugo van Reijen's book, Simon Calder treated them all with disdain. Now he's first in the check-in queue for Karachi.



Hugo van Reijen: a keen eye for the best buys

Declaration of interest: I have met Hugo van Reijen, author of *Why Not Fly Cheaper?* In fact, I very recently bought him a drink. But that was mainly to thank him for writing the closest that the business traveller will get to a Bible (besides the Gideon edition that still appears in many hotel rooms).

You may think that *Why Not Fly Cheaper?* is a book or article, or much-faded document that you have already read. But Mr van Reijen's paperback is brand new and anything but trivial. It is not a book for amateurs, but a manual for people who have found themselves in the wrong departure lounge, or on the wrong flight, or in the wrong class, once too often.

"If you request a fare quote from five different employees in the same airline office, you will most of the time get five different fare quotes, especially if the journey is slightly complicated", says Mr van Reijen. The secret is to know how to interpret the extraordinary complexity of air fare regulations to your maximum advantage, and that is where the book can help.

Take note, though: if all you want is the cheapest return trip from Manchester to Madrid or Stansted to Stockholm, then just phone around. *Why Not Fly Cheaper?* is intended to exploit the official rules that the airlines have established for themselves on multi-sector itineraries.

The basic rule is that anyone paying full fare is entitled to a great deal more than just tran-

sportation from A to B. Take a simple trip like Edinburgh-London, with a fare of £134. For the same amount you can stop off for the day in Manchester, attending additional meetings and piling up extra Air Miles for zero cost.

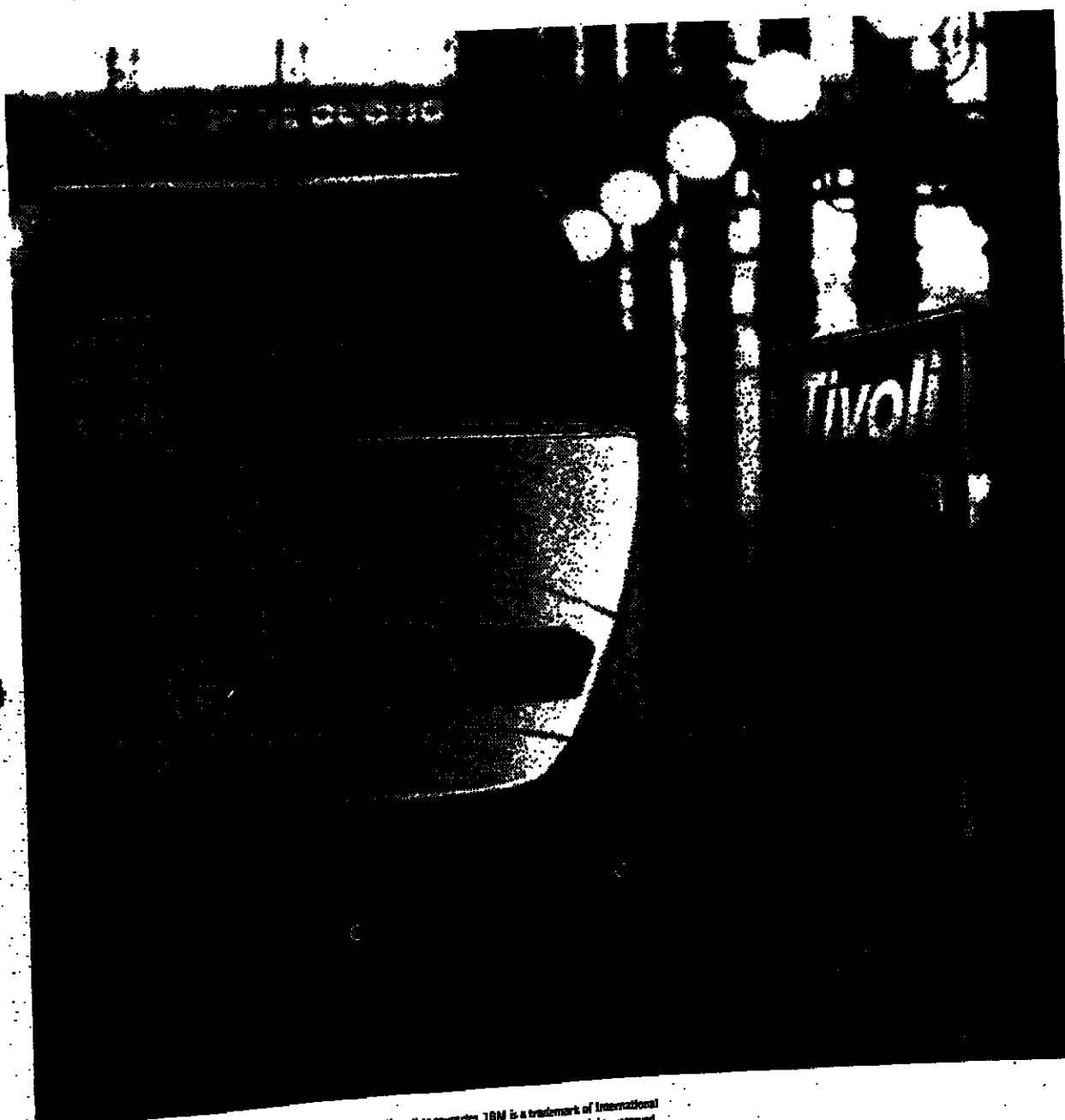
Once you look beyond Britain and take into account currency fluctuations, the savings become much more dramatic. A particular favourite of Mr van Reijen is the "Navigator" pass, price £1,199 off-season, which allows 28,500 miles of travel so long as you touch a point in the South Pacific.

The book explains the theories of "maximum permitted mileage" and "directional minimum check", and how best to deal with them. The current best buys are to be found in Pakistan, where official fares to all manner of destinations are much lower than in Britain. Islamabad-London-Buenos Aires, for example, is about half the rate for the ticket between the UK and Argentinian capitals alone.

"I got last week a letter from a couple of honeymooners. They had flown to Pakistan specifically to buy intercontinental tickets", Mr van Reijen recalls. Half an hour later, I booked my ticket to Karachi.

Why Not Fly Cheaper? by Hugo van Reijen is published by Airline Publishing, 101 Longdon Road, Stretford, Merseyside SK8 9EB.

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28/RUGBY LEAGUE

Truth is too hard to bear for Britain

Australia's latest series victory against Great Britain has served as a sobering reminder that Super League's global pretensions ring hollow. Rugby league, says Dave Hadfield, now has to bridge a yawning credibility gap here.

The most disturbing aspect of the Test series against Australia which finished on Sunday is not that Great Britain lost but that so many people believe there must have been something fishy about the one match they won.

If I had a quid for everyone - usually, but not always, from outside the game - who told me during the week between the second and third Tests that Britain's victory at Old Trafford was a fix, I would have a tidy little stake for a few side-bets of my own.

There is always this whisper whenever a series goes into its final Test conveniently poised at one-all, as has happened every time since 1988.

As befits an organisation born of conspiracy, there is also a faint whiff of corporate collusion about Super League, a feeling that events might just be contrived for the greater good.

And then there is the disparity between Australia's displays in the second and third Tests. That no doubt convinced a few waverers that there was indeed something amiss. How on earth could Great Britain have beaten this lot without some sinister intervention?

Well, I refer you to the words of the Australian captain, Laurie Daley. "Absolute garbage," he said. "There's no way in the world we went out at Old Trafford to lose. We just weren't good enough to win on the day."

Apart from the fact that Daley is a natural straight-shooter, there is proof that this is the truth. He and his team had a week off planned if they had won at Old Trafford and scaled the series; and there is no force in the world that could persuade a group of Australian sportsmen to trade in a week on the grid for a week of hard training.

I rest my case. But what does it say about the credibility of the game that a sizeable minority of people could think it possible that the match could have been thrown? Nothing very flattering, I fear.

And, of course, credibility is the name of the game whenever we assess the latest round of damage done by the Australians. They have inflicted more pain this year than most, trouncing British teams in the World Club Championship and then defeating the national side in a Test series for the 12th time in a row.

It is too familiar a scenario to induce any surprise, but in the aftermath of Old Trafford there were those who allowed themselves to dream of the galvanising effect that finally beating them would have.

Yes, it would have been great fun. But it would have obscured a great many things that are wrong: the steepest decline in the game in this country came immediately



Stuck in the middle: Great Britain's Chris Joynt is overpowered by Australia defenders at Elland Road. Photograph: Allsport

after the 1970 Ashes victory - our last - in Australia.

We could have lost sight of the fact that in a game supposedly full-time professional at its highest level, most of its clubs are run with shambolic amateurism and incompetence. We would have been liable to forget that the sport's central administration cannot devise a strategy and stick to it for more than five minutes.

Instead, the way that our best players - the ones who have made the most of themselves despite the woefully uneven competition in which they play - were overrun in the first

half at Elland Road stands as an eloquent reminder of how much there is to do.

After the debacle of Great Britain's tour to the South Pacific last year, there were plenty of things about our approach to international rugby that needed to be said. Strangely, the report from the tour manager, Phil Lowe, that should have said them never appeared.

This time, the conclusions should be brought out into the open and a commitment made to following them through. For a start, as the League's chief executive, Maurice Lindsay, has already conceded, the Great

Britain squad needs to become something more permanent than the loose agglomeration of coaches and players which gets together only when foreign opposition is appearing over the horizon.

The Great Britain coach, Andy Goodway, also wants to introduce an intermediate level of competition for aspiring international players - a national B team that could play developing league countries.

Of course, this all costs money and the catastrophic way in which the News Ltd hand-out was doled out to clubs so expert at wasting it has

ensured that there is nothing in any central pot with which to finance it.

The lesson of the WCC and this Test series has been that international competition - even one-sided international competition - attracts coverage in areas that are not normally saturated in rugby league.

But Super League's "global vision" remains an unproven dream. Next year is supposed to feature a World Cup. More worrying than the usual concern about how Britain will perform are hints that the competition may not even take place.

Time to capitalise on the game's strengths

It is disappointing to have lost yet another series to Australia, but we should not look at the deciding game at Elland Road in isolation. For 10 years Great Britain teams have been capable of competing at this level on occasion. But what we don't have to do is play at that level week after week.

Players like Andy Farrell are as good as any in the world. Simon Haughton showed what a prospect he is and Kris Radlinski's defence was brilliant.

But they suffer from what I found when I played at Wigan. We could play St Helens one week and the intensity of that was as great as in any match anywhere. After that, however, you could have three relatively easy matches, which only serve to develop bad habits in players.

We still produce the quality of players, but not the quantity - and this is something to do with the quality of coaching, not just at first-team level but right down to the under-10s.

And we should not rely too much on the excuse that, compared with Australia, we are drawing on a relatively small population for our players. There are organisations which overcome that problem. A football team such as Ajax, for instance, has a relatively small catchment area, but, because it has the right coaching structures, the Dutch club has one of the best production lines in the game.

Australia do have an advantage, because even the people coaching small children have a good grounding in the game. It is part of their culture; they hear Peter Sterling on television every week, explaining the technicalities.



PHIL CLARKE

In Britain, we rely on willing volunteers, of whatever standard or level of knowledge.

One way to increase our player pool is to try to attract those who have not made it in other sports. They might have failed as footballers, runners, boxers or whatever, but they have good habits and a certain level of athleticism.

If they have that, they can learn the skills of the game in a couple of years; I believe this is an area where we should make a real push. A player like Gordon Tallis, say, is first and foremost an outstanding athlete, who has acquired enough technical ability to be effective.

Yet it is not all doom and gloom. Rugby league has many strengths in this country. The players and the fans still have a rapport with each other which has long since been lost in other sports. That is something that has to be maintained and nurtured.

Also, the training and conditioning that rugby league players experience is streets ahead of what goes on at Premiership football clubs.

So it is not a case of us doing everything wrong. It is more a matter, as we saw again at Elland Road, of the Australians still doing it that bit better.

- Phil Clarke is a former captain of Great Britain

PHILIPS



Today we publish the latest results of The Independent Fantasy Football League. Because of this weekend's international games, there are no changes to the player scores. The league table includes all scores up to November 9th. This month's winner is Jessica Plews from London. With a monthly total of 120 points, Jessica has won a pair of tickets to England's next home international.

Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

If a player is given a Yellow Card they lose 1 point, if a player is given a Red Card they lose 3 points. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count.

The Premiership Manager that you choose will be awarded 3 points if their real-life team wins, 1 point is awarded if they draw and no points are given if they lose.

Updated player scores and league tables will be published every Tuesday in The Independent and repeated the following Sunday in the Independent on Sunday.

HOW TO SCORE			
player scores	4		
clean sheet	4		
winning goal	1		
successful assist	3		
Yellow Card	-1		
Red Card	-3		
manager's team wins	3		
draw	1		
loss	0		

INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 16 NOVEMBER

LEAGUE TABLE

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	Miss Lisa Wild	Ameresco	534
2	Mr Chris King	Seaking Victory	534
3	Mr Phil Toller	Pin Ups 4	534
4	Mr David Evans	Bootham End Old Boys	534
5	Mr John Cox	Southville FC	534
6	Mr Martin Pawley	Robert Rovers	533
7	Mr B Srai	The Uncouthables	533
8	Mr David Aston	Billy Boys 2nd II	532
9	Mr Archer	No Whinge	531
10	Mr B Srai	Simply The Best	531
11	Mr Steven Scott	Power Rangers	530
12	Mr P Green	The Dream Team	530
13	Mr Abdul Choudh	Niddies 9th II	529
14	Mr E Gromley	Catic Warriors	529
15	Mr J McCrossan	Washed Up Army	529
16	Mr Stewart Scott	Unbeatable	529
17	Mr Chris Thomas	Scumchamps Extras	529
18	Mr Ian Boyle	Wendy Blanders	529
19	Mr David Baker	Deja Vu	529
20	Mr A Wingrove	Tony's Brains	529
21	Mr Tom Lyons	Diablo's Demons	529
22	Mr David Edmondson	Edmo United	529
23	Mr Tony Bruster	Look For Short	529
24	Mr Brady	Look Lively	529
25	Mr Ian Boyle	Cloghton Rovers	529
26	Mr Michael Rickard	After Lumberg	529
27	Mr Trevor Russ	Sunny's Soccer Scorchers	529
28	Mr Kiley	The Killer Bees	529
29	Mr David Baker	Dead Beat	529
30	Mr D Depoit	Quick Start	529
31	Mr Steven Mann	Rebecca Rovers	529
32	Mr J Salt	One Vast City	529
33	Mr G Bell	Barnham United	529
34	Mr John Cox	Scumchamps Extras	529
35	Mr J McCrossan	Rezo Rovers	529
36	Mr David Aston	Washed Up Army	529
37	Mr P Toller	Billy Boys 3rd II	529
38	Mr Ian Down	Pin Ups 2	529
39	Mr K Brady	Ruffins	529
40	Mr G Bell	My First Selection	529
41	Mr Mike Mitchell	Linthorpe Rovers	529
42	Mr David Astor	Enduring Image	529
43	Mr G Whisthead	The Green Team	529
44	Mr David Astor	Jacks Lads	529
45	Mr Mike Evans	Billy's Boys	529
46	Mr Mike Evans	I've Scared But I Will Finish	529
47	Mr A Mitchell	Miss A Team	529
48	Mr A Cunningham	The Eye For It	529
49		The Zebra	529

GOALKEEPERS

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	300 Seaman	ARS	37.40
2	301 Latic	ARS	37.40
3	302 Manning	ARS	37.40
4	303 Latic	ARS	37.40
5	304 Manning	ARS	37.40
6	305 Latic	ARS	37.40
7	306 Manning	ARS	37.40
8	307 Wilson	BAR	37.40
9	308 Latic	ARS	37.40
10	309 Flowers	BLA	37.40
11	310 Flann	BLA	37.40
12	311 Flann	BLA	37.40
13	312 Flann	BLA	37.40
14	313 Flann	BLA	37.40
15	314 Flann	BLA	37.40
16	315 Flann	BLA	37.40
17	316 Flann	BLA	37.40
18	317 Flann	BLA	37.40
19	318 Flann	BLA	37.40
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21	320 Flann	BLA	37.40
22	321 Flann	BLA	37.40
23	322 Flann	BLA	37.40
24	323 Flann	BLA	37.40
25	324 Flann	BLA	37.40
26	325 Flann	BLA	37.40
27	326 Flann	BLA	37.40
28	327 Flann	BLA	37.40
29	328 Flann	BLA	37.40
30	329 Flann	BLA	37.40

DEFENDERS

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	400 Dixon	ARS	28.25
2	401 Dixon	ARS	28.25
3	402 Dixon	ARS	28.25
4	403 Dixon	ARS	28.25
5	404 Dixon	ARS	28.25
6	405 Dixon	ARS	28.25
7	406 Dixon	ARS	28.25
8	407 Dixon	ARS	28.25
9	408 Dixon	ARS	28.25
10	409 Dixon	ARS	28.25
11	410 Dixon	ARS	28.25
12	411 Dixon	ARS	28.25
13	412 Dixon	ARS	28.25
14	413 Dixon	ARS	28.25
15	414 Dixon	ARS	28.25
16	415 Dixon	ARS	28.25
17	416 Dixon	ARS	28.25
18	417 Dixon	ARS	28.25
19	418 Dixon	ARS	28.25
20	419 Dixon	ARS	28.25
21	420 Dixon	ARS	28.25
22	421 Dixon	ARS	28.25
23	422 Dixon	ARS	28.25
24	423 Dixon	ARS	28.25
25	424 Dixon	ARS	28.25
26	425 Dixon	ARS	28.25
27	426 Dixon	ARS	28.25
28	427 Dixon	ARS	28.25
29	428 Dixon	ARS	28.25
30	429 Dixon	ARS	28.25

STRIKERS

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	600 Wallace	LEE	50.18
2	601 Wallace	LEE	50.18
3	602 Wallace	LEE	50.18
4	603 Wallace	LEE	50.18
5	604 Wallace	LEE	50.18
6	605 Wallace	LEE	50.18
7	606 Wallace	LEE	50.18
8	607 Wallace	LEE	50.18
9	608 Wallace	LEE	50.18
10	609 Wallace	LEE	50.18
11	610 Wallace	LEE	50.18
12	611 Wallace	LEE	50.18
13	612 Wallace	LEE	50.18
14	613 Wallace	LEE	50.18
15	614 Wallace	LEE	50.18
16	615 Wallace	LEE	50.18
17	616 Wallace	LEE	50.18
18	617 Wallace	LEE	50.18
19	618 Wallace	LEE	50.18
20	619 Wallace	LEE	50.18
21	620 Wallace	LEE	50.18
22	621 Wallace	LEE	50.18
23	622 Wallace	LEE	50.18
24	623 Wallace	LEE	50.18
25	624 Wallace	LEE	50.18
26	625 Wallace	LEE	50.18
27	626 Wallace	LEE	50.18
28	627 Wallace	LEE	50.18
29	628 Wallace	LEE	50.18
30	629 Wallace	LEE	50.18

MANAGERS

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	900 Wenger	ARS	27.75
2	901 Wenger	ARS	27.75
3	902 Wenger	ARS	27.75
4	903 Wenger	ARS	27.75
5	904 Wenger	ARS	27.75
6	905 Wenger	ARS	27.75
7	906 Wenger	ARS	27.75
8	907 Wenger	ARS	27.75
9	908 Wenger	ARS	27.75
10	909 Wenger	ARS	27.75
11	910 Wenger	ARS	27.75
12	911 Wenger	ARS	27.75
13	912 Wenger	ARS	27.75
14	913 Wenger	ARS	27.75
15	914 Wenger	ARS	27.75
16	915 Wenger	ARS	27.75
17	916 Wenger	ARS	27.75
18	917 Wenger	ARS	27.75
19	918 Wenger	ARS	27.75
20	919 Wenger	ARS	27.75
21	920 Wenger	ARS	27.75
22	921 Wenger	ARS	27.75
23	922 Wenger	ARS	27.75
24	923 Wenger	ARS	27.75
25	924 Wenger	ARS	27.75
26	925 Wenger	ARS	27.75
27	926 Wenger	ARS	27.75
28	927 Wenger	ARS	27.75
29	928 Wenger	ARS	27.75
30	929 Wenger	ARS	27.75

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مسكن الامم

The decline of the English front row is one of the mysteries of the age



ALAN
WATKINS
ON
RUGBY

A lot of rugby followers will, I suspect, be fed up with the game even before they have started their Christmas dinners. They will have seen too much of it and certainly read too much about it. Last Saturday and Sunday witnessed not one but four internationals, all involving countries from the southern hemisphere. The only European country not to have been on display was Scotland.

By switching channels and using the video recorder it was possible to be in two places at once, which was probably a bad thing to be. Nevertheless, it enables us to establish a world ranking: 1 New Zealand, 2 South Africa, 3 France, 4 Australia. And who are to fill the

fifth position? Many readers would doubtless reply "England, of course", assuming they had not had made England No 4.

I am not so sure. True, England scraped a draw with Australia through the boot of a semi-conscious Mike Catt. Perhaps Clive Woodward, the coach, should arrange for him to take a bump before he tries every kick. For previously, though he had managed four successful penalties, Catt had not looked at all happy in his execution. He missed several he should have put over.

So did John Eales for Australia. He missed four of them. The English rugby correspondent who wrote afterwards that the draw was "a fair result" seemed to be showing altogether too much indulgence towards his native land.

Yes, I know perfectly well that try-captains can be misleading. On this occasion they were not. George Gregan scored an excellent try for Australia. Ben 'Times a good one' England looked like scoring only once - when Adedayo Adeniyi was pulled down just short of the line which, if he had been playing for Bath, he would have crossed through sheer determination. Though he seemed to be suffering at times from a touch of the Underwoods (which may be defined as a tendency to gaze into distant space while forgetting

where the touchline is) he deserves another chance. So does David Rees on the other wing. So also does Will Greenwood, who should, however, be played in his proper position of inside centre, and not messed about as he was on Saturday. Still, the only English backs able to leave the field with credit were Kyran Bracken, Catt and Matt Perry.

Quite why that illiterate Twickenham crowd have it in for Catt continues to elude me. As a sheer footballer, Perry is his only rival. But he is not an international place-kicker. Jon Callard and Paul Grayson are. It is folly for Woodward to take England into the Five Nations when Ireland, Wales

and France's kickers will be, respectively, Eric Elwood, Neil Jenkins and Christophe Lamaison.



Pete Sampras serves his way to victory over Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the ATP Tour Championship final. Photograph: AFP

Sampras confirms his status as the master of his art

He has been described as dull - boring, even - but when it came to voting for the top man of the past 25 years, the professional tennis community decided that Pete Sampras was simply the best. John Roberts reports.

THE BEST IN 25 YEARS OF THE ATP	
The top 10	Pts
1 Pete Sampras	779 (26)
2 Bjorn Borg	754 (17)
3 John McEnroe	721 (13)
4 Jimmy Connors	634 (9)
5 Ivan Lendl	493 (3)
6 Boris Becker	446 (0)
7 Stefan Edberg	372 (1)
8 Rod Laver	360 (14)
9 Mats Wilander	209 (0)
10 Ilie Nastase	185 (0)

While Luciano Pavarotti was making the draw for the ATP Tour Championship at Hannover, Pete Sampras mentioned to Greg Rusedski that he had attended a concert the previous evening. In his laid-back Californian manner, Sampras paid Pavarotti the highest compliment - "He can sing." Pavarotti no doubt considers that Sampras can play, not that the American needs a great tenor to sing his praises.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Association of Tennis Professionals, which in 1970 became the ATP Tour, 100 current and past players, tournament directors and members of the media voted for their top 25 players. Sampras was the No 1, just as he has been in the year-end world rankings for the past five years.

The announcement was made on the court on Sunday after 15,000 spectators and millions of television viewers had marvelled at the maestro's performance in winning the ATP Tour Championship for the fourth time. In the final Sampras outclassed Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov in every department of the game to triumph 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

In the ATP ballot Sampras received 26 first-place votes and finished with 779 points, 25 points ahead of Sweden's Bjorn Borg. Two of Sampras's fiery compatriots came next, Jimmy

Connors at No 3 and John McEnroe at No 4. The other day, in conversation with McEnroe, your correspondent asked the turbulent one if he was amused to be regarded as an elder statesman nowadays in view of his rebellious career. He smiled wryly and cited the passage of time. With regard to the 'perception of Sampras as peerless but colourless', McEnroe pointed out that Borg was not exactly riotous.

Philippe Bouin, of the French daily sports newspaper *L'Equipe*, described Sampras as "an attacking Borg who does not have the devil of a McEnroe, a Connors or a Nastase". From the personality aspect, Borg and Ivan Lendl, were ide-

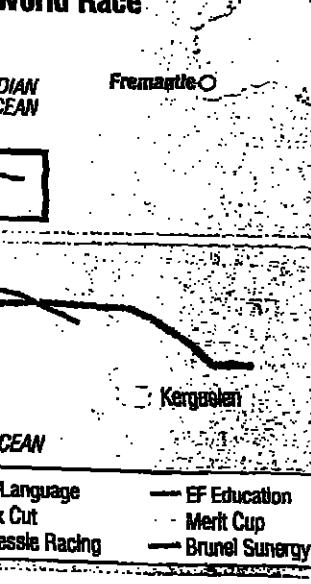
al counterpoints to their run-bustious rivals. These days, the argument goes, there are too many straight men and not enough comedians.

If the vote for Sampras was a commendation for pure tennis, the result of the poll was not a slight on anybody. As an ATP Tour spokesman stressed: "Several of the sport's great players were nearing the end of their careers when the Open era began in 1968 and the ATP was formed in 1972. None the less, such was their impact on men's tennis that voters gave stars such as Laver and Rosewall a great deal of support in the balloting."

FINAL 1997 ATP WORLD RANKINGS

Rank	Player	Points
1	P Sampras (USA)	4,547 pts
2	P Rafter (AUS)	3,210
3	M Chang (USA)	2,977
4	J Bjorn Borg (SWE)	2,943
5	Y Kafelnikov (RUS)	2,880
6	G Rusedski (GB)	2,817
7	C Hagg (SWE)	2,808
8	S Bruguera (ESP)	2,387
9	T Muster (AUT)	2,383
10	M Floc (CHI)	2,317
11	I Kijak (GER)	2,229
12	A Corretja (ESP)	2,275
13	P Korda (USA)	2,281
14	G Kuerten (FRA)	2,225
15	G Ivanisevic (CRO)	2,176
16	F Montana (ESP)	2,110
17	T Harnett (GB)	1,929
18	M Philippoussis (AUS)	1,908
19	A Costa (ESP)	1,778
20	C Piccini (ITA)	1,534

Whitbread Round the World Race



hitting high speeds, more gear breakage is expected. The shore crews already trickling into Fremantle know that they will have a lot of work to do and that their pit stopover time is likely to be cut by two or three days. Only Swedish Match is on schedule to complete the leg in 16 days. There will be little time for relaxation.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Young on song as 49ers make it 10 wins in a row

Steve Young threw one touchdown and ran for another as the San Francisco 49ers beat Carolina Panthers 27-19 to claim their 10th successive victory and their fifth NFC West title in the last six years.

ICE HOCKEY

Storm return to form and top of league

Manchester Storm put their recent slump behind them with an 8-3 win over Basingstoke Bison which lifted them back to the top of the Superleague table on Sunday. Storm had surrendered the top spot to Ayr Scottish Eagles after losing twice in the space of five days to Sheffield Steelers.

SAILING: WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE

Smith and Cayard locked in Southern Ocean duel

Swedish Match is now well past the half-way mark and should win the second leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race by a street. However, as Stuart Alexander reports from Fremantle, the real racing is taking place down the fleet.

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from home and have been suffering for 40 years. Now Jamaica have qualified all Jamaicans will be uplifted."

Despite enlisting the help of the Sports Minister, Tony Banks, Jamaica have had their request to play England at Wembley turned down, at least for now, because the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, has other plans.

The FA chief executive, Graham Kelly, said "Jamaica do not come into Glenn's immediate plans as he concentrates on *France '98*, but we will certainly bear them in mind for the next round of friendly matches between 1998 and 2000."

Signature: _____

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FOOTBALL

Ferguson looks to South America for £10m deal on Salas

Manchester United have a reputation for producing homegrown talent, but they may be about to spend £10m on a Chilean striker, Marcelo Salas. Alan Nixon reports.

Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, was so impressed with what he saw of Marcelo Salas at the weekend that he has told the Chilean striker's agent to proceed with the deal to bring him to Old Trafford.

Ferguson watched Salas in Chile's World Cup victory over Bolivia. The prolific striker's agent, Fani Zahavi, was due to fly to Argentina yesterday to meet Salas's club, River Plate, in an attempt to reduce the fee from the club's £12m valuation.

United's chief executive, Martin Edwards, is standing by to fly to South America this week if a price can be agreed. Salas is also keen to talk to United and it is understood there would be no problems with his personal terms. "Italian, Spanish and German players all want to play in England - I think it's the best place in the world to play," Ferguson said yesterday. "I think Salas could play here without any problem."

Liverpool are set to go to the High Court to clear the way for Brad Friedel's £2m move to Anfield. The club are angry that

their work permit application for the United States goalkeeper is being held up by red tape. Roy Evans, the manager, wants to fly Friedel in for a debut against Barnsley at Anfield on Saturday, but the Department of Employment and Education are refusing to let Friedel in immediately because they are in a legal wrangle with Portsmouth over their attempt to sign the Australian goalkeeper, Zeljko Kalac.

Liverpool are willing to go to the High Court themselves in the next 48 hours to get Friedel into the country in time to play at the weekend. The club intends to prove that there are players already in England who have poorer international records than Friedel.

Everton have moved to kill off speculation that their chairman, Peter Johnson, is about to sell his controlling interest in the Goodison Park club. After growing rumours that he was on the brink of selling his 24,000 shares, Everton issued a brief statement on his behalf, saying: "There is no truth whatsoever in the recent speculation surrounding chairman Peter Johnson's shareholding at Everton FC."

An Everton spokesman said: "I understand that he and his advisors are making strenuous efforts to obtain the source of this misinformation."

Arsène Wenger admitted to

concern about his players' commercial activities yesterday after leaving Ian Wright out of the side to face Coventry in the Coca-Cola Cup tonight. Wright has not scored in his last four matches and recently told the England coach Glenn Hoddle that he is to do less off the field.

"Ian is a little low on confidence at the moment and asked me how he could change things," Wenger said. "I encouraged him to cut down on off-the-field activities. Some players earn more off the field than they do from their jobs. The problem will have to be solved."

Faustino Asprilla's planned comeback for tonight's Coca-Cola Cup tie against Derby is in doubt. The Newcastle striker, who has missed the last six weeks because of a groin injury, has picked up a virus.

Kevin Drinkell, the Stirling manager, is to back the Ivory Coast-born striker Landry Zohani-Oni after allegations that he made obscene gestures to Patrick Thistle supporters. Police received three complaints after the First Division match at Forthbank on Saturday and the matter has been referred to Stirling officials and the Scottish Football Association. However, Drinkell intends seeking a meeting with the Scottish Players' Union chief, Tony Higgins, claiming his player was racially abused.



Party time: Jamaican fans in Kingston celebrate qualification for the World Cup finals. Photograph: Reuters

Footballers in the big league of earners

Football's increased profile and lucrative contracts have put many of its leading players on to British sport's earnings leaderboard.

According to the BBC Radio 5 Live Sports Yearbook 1998, published next month, 14 footballers take home more than £1m a year with Alan Shearer earning £3.5m.

Ryan Giggs and Paul Ince, the next best football earners, fail to match Shearer between them, while David Beckham could eclipse them all, having earned £1.35m in his second year as a Manchester United regular.

"We estimate that the average Premiership footballer earns around £350,000 a year - and that's before sponsorship deals are added on top," Pete Nichols, the Yearbook editor, said.

But football still lags behind sports such as boxing and motor racing, which provide five of the top seven. The biggest British earner was world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis.

- Miles Hodgson

Britain's 1997 sporting millionaires	
1 Lennox Lewis (Boxing)	£3.5m
2 Nathan Aspinall (Snooker)	£3.5m
3 Damon Hill (Motor Racing)	£3.5m
4 Alan Shearer (Football)	£3.5m
5 Nick Faldo (Golf)	£3.5m
6 Tony Stewart (Motor Racing)	£2.5m
7 David Coulthard (Motor Racing)	£2.5m
8 Colin Montgomerie (Golf)	£1.85m
9 Ryan Giggs (Football)	£1.65m
10 Paul Ince (Football)	£1.65m
11 Les Ferdinand (Football)	£1.65m
12 Greg Rusedski (Tennis)	£1.65m
13 Henry Adams (Boxing)	£1.65m
14 Jimmy White (Snooker)	£1.65m
15 Colin McRae (Rallying)	£1.65m
16 Stephen Hendry (Snooker)	£1.65m
17 Tim Henman (Tennis)	£1.65m
18 David Beckham (Football)	£1.35m
19 Sean Connolly (Football)	£1.35m
20 Henry Adams (Boxing)	£1.35m
21 Eddie Irvine (Motor Racing)	£1.25m
22 John Barnes (Football)	£1.2m
23 Robbie Fowler (Football)	£1.2m
24 Ian Wright (Football)	£1.15m
25 Paul Gascoigne (Football)	£1.1m
26 Mark Blundell (Motor Racing)	£1.1m
27 Andy Cole (Football)	£1.1m
28 Graeme Le Saux (Football)	£1.1m
29 Lee Westwood (Golf)	£1.1m
30 Ian Woosnam (Golf)	£1.1m

TENNIS

Wimbledon's £31m profit

Wimbledon, the most successful lawn tennis championship in the history of the game, produced record profits of £31m last summer, an increase of six per cent from 1996.

The 1997 championships set a new attendance record of 436,531, 51,000 up on the year before, and the performance of British players was the best for years, with Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman reaching the quarter-finals of the men's singles.

Television records were also set, with 12.9m watching Henman's match against Paul Haarhuis on "People's Sunday" and similar figures for Henman's quarter-final with Michael Stich and Rusedski's last eight match against Cedric Pioline.

As always, the entire Wimbledon profits will be handed to the Lawn Tennis Association to be reinvested into the British game.

Off court the sport has made huge strides with increased tournament attendances, community tennis partnerships and the completion of the LTA five-year facilities plan.

- John Oakley

Ecstatic Jamaica dance to France

Jamaica, the land of cricket, rum and Bob Marley, have made it to football's World Cup finals.

Phil Davison joined the party in Kingston to witness the 'Reggae Boyz' make history.

The official programme said it was a football match. But it went from Woodstock-style festival of pre-match music, peace and love to a spiritual experience with flowing tears of joy. Long before the kick-off, Jamaicans had been convinced France '98 was their destiny and it turned out they were right.

When the final whistle blew and they knew they were bound for France, Jamaica's "Reggae Boyz" pushed back ecstatic fans, ordered them to be quiet and huddled in prayer along with their Brazilian manager, Rene Simoes. Minutes later, Jamaica's Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, declared today a public holiday to allow the party to go on.

"One Love," went the Bob Marley song played over and

over again in the hours before the kick-off. The fans had hoped that might be the score, but in the end they settled for 0-0 against Mexico. It was enough to make Jamaica the first English-speaking Caribbean country to reach the World Cup finals. (Spanish-speaking Cuba made it in 1938, the Dutch Antilles the same year, and French-speaking Haiti in 1974).

Only a Jamaican defeat and a simultaneous victory by El Salvador against the United States in Foxboro, Massachusetts, would have spoiled Sunday's party. But the Americans ended the central American side's hopes with a 4-2 win.

Among the most ecstatic Englishmen, Dean Burton of Derby County, Wimbledon's Robbie Earle, and Paul Hall and Fitzroy Simpson, both of Portsmouth. All born in England to Jamaican parents, they had renounced the chance to play for England and taken up Jamaican citizenship in a deal aimed at strengthening the island's squad.

From the moment they stood to attention during the national anthem, to the post-

match moments when all four shed tears, the "Fab Four," as fans have dubbed them, were clearly moved by the return to their roots and the fact that their decision appeared to have worked out for the best.

Earlier, they had been moved by the Prime Minister's announcement that all World Cup squad players would receive government land to build houses, helped by low-interest mortgages.

Responding to a reported criticism by the Italian manager, Cesare Maldini, Hall said he could not wait to face Italy in France. "We proved we deserve to be there," he said. "And we showed we're the best-supported team in the world."

Some of Simpson's Portsmouth's colleagues had laughed when he made the "reverse-immigration" trip. "Who's laughing now?" he said.

Although Simoes used him only as a substitute, Earle was full of praise for the Brazilian. "If he said 'walk over that' every player would do it," he said, pointing to his hotel's swimming pool.

Also visibly affected by the atmosphere in Kingston's rickety National Stadium was

Garth Crooks, the former Tottenham striker, who had never seen anything quite like it. "My mum and dad were both from here. I'd never seen a match here. I've covered a lot of football [for the BBC], but I've never felt anything like this. The moment [Jamaican reggae star] Dennis Brown started singing at the pre-match concert, I just welled up."

"And just before the end, when it was clear they were going to France, I saw a young girl burst out in tears of joy. I had to turn away before I did the same myself."

It was far from a great match, but the Jamaicans' Brazilian-style game will not be out of place in the finals.

And in France, the team will no doubt be looking forward to the luxury of a dug-out and an electronic scoreboard. At the National Stadium - dubbed "The Office" by fans - the only thing electric on Sunday was the atmosphere.

What looks like a scoreboard is a 30-year-old concrete billboard carrying the national flag and the national anthem's closing line: "Jamaica, Land We Love."

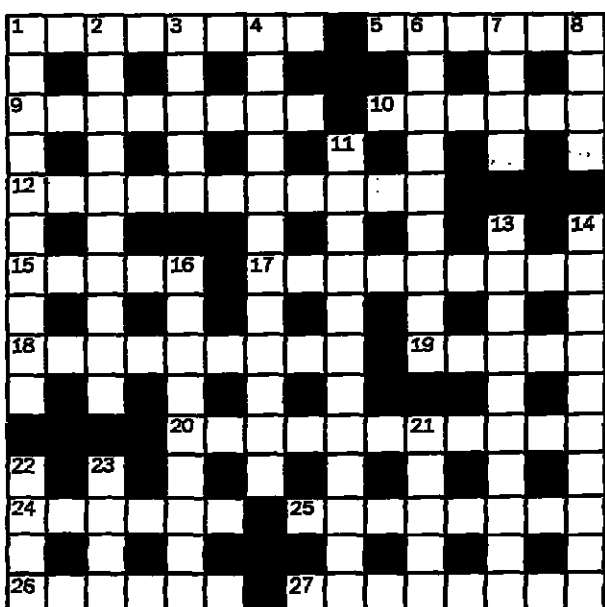
London's carnival, page 31

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3459, Tuesday 18 November

By Aclred

Monday's Solution



UPRIGHT FISHES
N A O A U D I I
DOVER KIDSLISTER
E I K E G V I H
RUSTICATE GUNGE
G U H P L
ONCE APPOINTED
N D R A A H
BIGHWATER FEELS
O A A R N
LEMON OBSTINATE
O O I N P L
OUTWITTHIT DRILL
F O A R E I S E
FORONGE SMARTLY

ACROSS

- Do create embellishing when you do this (8)
- Intelligence set spy onto revolutionary (6)
- One into gin could be finding means of getting lit up (8)
- The odds in this place would indicate a region of influence (6)
- South Hoy let could be suitable as a holiday place (5,6)
- House allowed to revert to place of entertainment (5)
- You should not look too closely at such present shore changes (9)
- Popular brother, say, in terrible surroundings is not to be seen (9)
- Export the Spanish throw out (5)

DOWN

- Material for covering, say, Gloucester clerics? (11)
- Element of hatred attracted by saint (6)
- Is appropriate to suppress mean painting? (4,4)
- No plus in former selection for England? (6)
- Mustn't upset a new risk-taker (8)
- Woman at length produces childish floral decoration (5,5)
- Producing restricted time to be as good as gold? (10)
- Be sick hearing about miserable person (5)
- Although having crude loaf, say, one has good ancestry (12)

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